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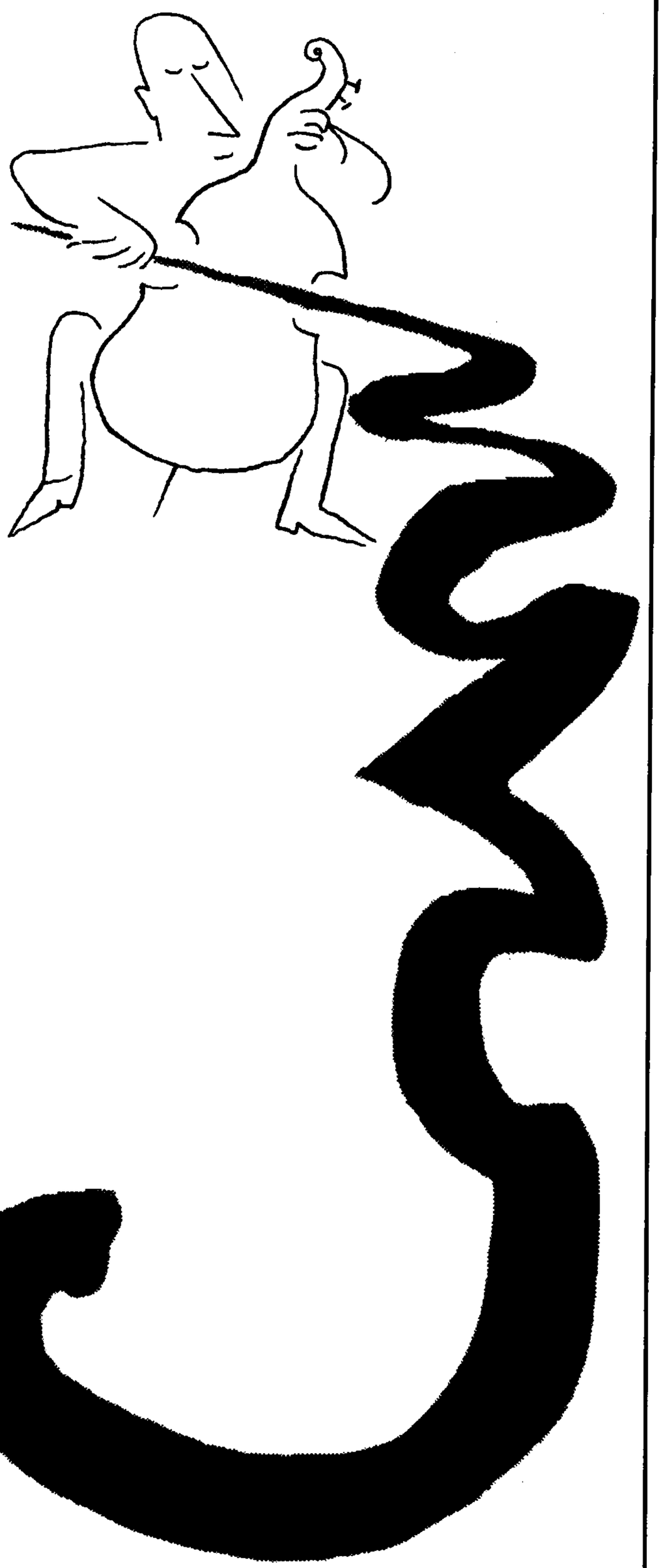

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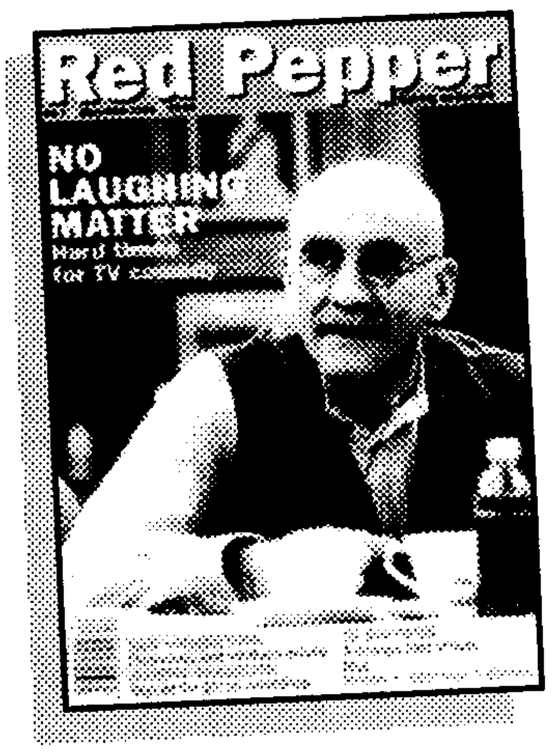

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THE National Lottery has been a huge success, creating its first millionaire in its very first week (a Lord G. of Mustique, who wishes to remain anonymous).

From the moment Emmanuel Strobes tossed the balls in the air and the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 came up, it was clear that a new era of Lottery Mania had dawned on Britain.

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E. Strobes
pp. Lord Gnome
C/o Gnome's House Party
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PRIVATE EYE

EYE WRITERS BOOK SIGNING!

For details see page 24

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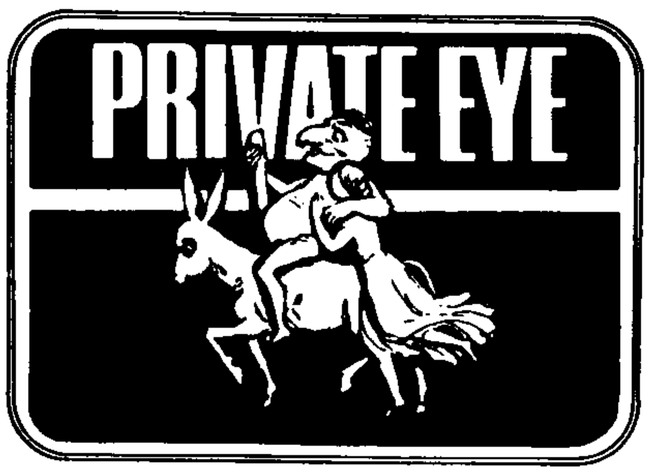


COLOUR SECTION

DECISION MAKERS, the influential parliamentary lobbyists whose best-known consultant (until her embarrassed resignation) was deputy Tory party chair Dame Angela Rumbold, have been snuggling up close to an even more influential politician: the prime minister.

For some years now, they have been sponsoring fund-raising events for the Tory party in Major's Huntingdon constituency. In answer to an Eye inquiry, Decision Makers chair Maureen Tomison reveals: "We do go to a very large number of social events involving politicians around the country as part of our job. One such event was a dinner dance in Huntingdon in autumn 1993 which was attended by several hundred other people. We paid for the tickets...Over the years we have been to two or three other functions in Huntingdon and, of course, have paid for the tickets."

As *Eye* readers will recall, this is not the only connection between Major and the big lobbyists. The censored Central TV programme on Ian Greer Associates (see *Eyes* 851 and 852) had Greer boasting of his close friendship with John Major, and Graham Bright MP, corpulent Tory MP for Luton South, Major's private secretary, had close connections with Greer. Indeed, almost as soon as Greer's contacts with Bright emerged last summer, Bright was sacked (with a knighthood, natch).

In previous years the brochure for the Tory party ball has carried a proud reference to Decision Makers' sponsorship. This year, however, the name had vanished from the brochure. Even more curiously, other famous sponsors of the ball have grown shy about their names appearing: British Gas, for instance.

PS In the MPs' register of interests John Major declares "nil".

COT DEATHS received a new wave of publicity following the *Cook Report* investigation linking the deaths to high levels of antimony found in fire retardant mattresses.

The programme suggested the chemical was transferred to babies via a toxic gas — which was not, of course, news to *Eye* readers. Back in March 1991, the *Eye* reported the government's reluctance to recognise a possible connection between cot deaths and fire retardant mattresses after Barry Richardson, of Penarth Research, discovered the link and suggested that at the very least babies should sleep on their backs to avoid breathing gases from the mattresses.

In August of that year, a letter from the department of health to Labour MP Nigel Griffiths showed that the government disagreed with this. "The chief medical officer did not agree with Mr Richardson over the use of new mattresses or the use of the prone position for babies," it said.

Minds were only changed late in 1991 when Ann Diamond went on TV to urge parents to lay babies on their backs. The department made a dramatic U-turn and asked Diamond to front its campaign. It now takes credit for the "back to sleep" campaign — although it did not support it initially.

Amazingly, the government's chief medical officer Kenneth Calman still pooh-poohs the fire retardant theory, just as he did way back then. He commented on television news following Roger Cook's programme that antimony is all around us: in water, food, the air and cigarette smoke. This undermined the idea that its presence in mattresses could be dangerous, he said.

Mr Ron Rooney, an analytical chemist, was so incensed by this argument he wrote to Nigel Griffiths, now Labour's shadow consumer minister. He told the MP that Calman's argument was "almost completely devoid of any scientific fact".

Rooney analysed a range of foods and cigarettes alongside cot mattresses to prove Calman's comparison was spurious. Water contained less than one part antimony per billion. Cow & Gate Premium infant milk contained less than five parts per billion. Cigarettes averaged out at a much higher 94 parts per billion — but hardly significant when compared to the enormous 10 million parts per billion contained in cot mattresses.

Isn't it now time the government carried out meaningful post mortem analysis, or is it too fearful of emerging with egg all over its face?

INFURIATED by the wrecking of plans to privatise the Royal Mail, the government is determined to do what it can to wreck this successful public company.

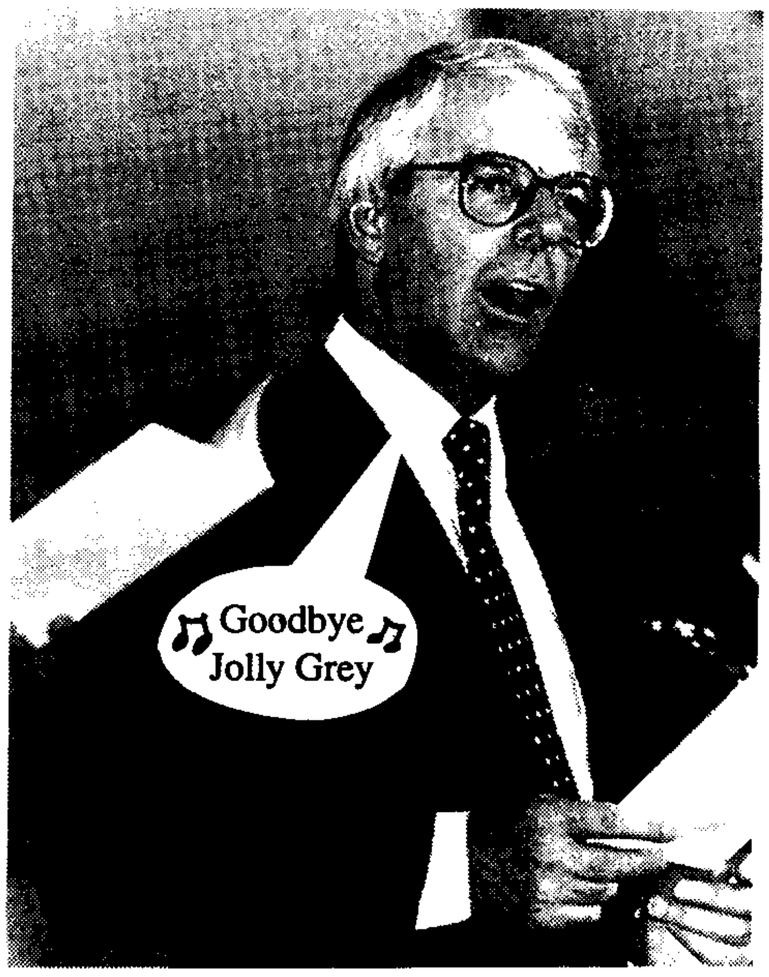
It reckons that if it can cut the demand for counter services, many rural post offices will have to close. One clever ruse in this direction is to persuade people on benefit to receive their money by standing order at the banks. At a stroke this pushes up the profits of the banks and cuts the government's payments to post offices, especially the smaller ones.

On 26 October, therefore, just as post office privatisation plans were being scuppered, the Benefits Agency sent out a memo for the attention of all staff who deal with income support. They were ordered to pass on to their "customers" — ie the poorest people in the country, who collect their benefit by giro or through their order book at post offices — a "mail shot" with information on how to receive their income support by "automated credit transfer" (ACT) through banks and building societies. The "mail shot" includes a freepost return envelope with which they can snap up the latest offer.

If enough "customers" do that, the Benefits Agency will then slash its payment to Post Office Counters, with devastating consequences for the smaller post offices.

FACT: There is a post office in 65 per cent of small towns and villages — banks or building societies in only 5 per cent.

FACT: Average queuing time in post offices is five minutes — much shorter than in banks.



● *Slicker on Aitken 28* ● *Budge the Helicopter 26* ● *Hallo! to Captain Fog and Lady Legover 7* ● *Maxwell & Goldsmith: double Literary Review 24*
● *Dear Bill* ● *John Major's (Last?) Secret Diary* ● *Much much more...*

Street of Shame

THE *Daily Mail* is striving to keep readers accurately informed about the national lottery — but not striving quite hard enough.

The rag reported how shopkeepers could rake in an amazing £23,000 a year commission by selling lottery tickets, but the figure left shopkeepers scratching their heads. Some bright sparks worked out that to make that sum a shop would have to sell a ticket every 30 seconds, 12 hours a day, 7 days a week.

When challenged about this, a shirty *Daily Stail* reporter said the figure was an average of all shops, including big supermarkets. And anyway, she added snottily, the figures were provided by a respected market research firm called, Verdict.

Even large supermarkets could not reach the enormous figure of 1,270 tickets a day. And a quick call to the market research firm revealed an interesting fact about the source of their figures: "They are just the figures that Camelot gave us," said a spokesman. So thumbs up to Camelot, who certainly know how to put out positive pr to unknowing consumers affairs correspondents.

THE *Sun*'s gorblimey specialist Richard Littlejohn, a stern advocate of law and order, is having legal problems of his own.

Two weeks ago he told his editor, Stuart Higgins, that he had accepted a job offer from the downmarket *Daily Mail*. Although his *Sun* contract does not run out until next July, he felt sure his employers would be willing to release him before then. Within hours, the burly pundit had his answer — a letter from the *Sun*'s solicitors threatening him with an injunction to ensure that he stayed put at Wapping.

A startled Littlejohn rang Higgins and suggested they could sort this out over lunch, like "gentlemen" (*sic*), without resorting to lawyers. But when Higgins turned up for the lunch escorted by *Sun* lawyer Tom Crone, it became clear a civilised solution was unlikely.

Things went from bad to worse on Monday this week, when Higgins dropped the main item from Littlejohn's column — a brisk attack on Lord Wyatt of Weeford — without any explanation. Complaining that his position had become "untenable", Littlejohn promptly handed in his resignation.

If the *Sun* carries out its threat to sue the *Mail* for "inducing" Littlejohn to break his contract, the wretched Higgins may have an uncomfortable time in the witness box. For he himself has spent much of the past year trying to lure a posse of *Mail* hacks — including Ian Monk, Richard Kay and Edward Verity — to come and work for the *Sun*, even though they all have copper-bottomed contracts with Lord Rothermere.

Higgins should also recall that only a couple of years ago his own boss, Rupert Murdoch, made strenuous efforts to persuade *Mail* editor Paul Dacre to come and edit *The Times*. Meanwhile, the *Sun* is searching desperately for someone to replace its star columnist. Hot favourite at the moment is the right-wing LSE don Dr David Starkey, aka "the rudest man in Britain". Given the *Sun*'s antipathy to "poofs", however, there may be one slight difficulty: Dr Starkey is a committed homosexualist.

HIGGINS has, meanwhile, sacked Damien Lazarus, a recent recruit to the newsroom, for the hideous crime of... not wearing a tie.

Lazarus's card was marked when he reported on a New Age festival (see *Eye* 853) and instead of turning out the normal *Sun* drivel slamming the travellers for being dirty, dole-scrounging hippies, he praised their environmentally friendly way of life. The *Sun* spiked the story.

When Higgins recently spotted Lazarus outside the Football Association headquarters during the Bruce Grobelaar story and noticed that his hack was wearing a scruffy lumberjack shirt and no tie, he decided to spike the hack as well.

IT'S bad enough for the *Daily Torygraph* that its absurd Los Angeles correspondent William Cash is currently in hot water over his article in the *Spectator* which implied that Hollywood is controlled by a "Jewish cabal". But Cash's stint in LA has already proved something of an embarrassment to his employers for other reasons.

In a *Telegraph* piece about America's obsession with O.J. Simpson, for instance, he confessed that although he had lived in the US for five years he had never heard of Simpson before he was arrested. Since Simpson was a celebrity in America on the scale of Gazza, Frank Bruno and Ian Botham all rolled into one, this raised questions about whether young William actually knew much about the country he was supposedly covering.

Cash's willingness to steal shamelessly from the work of other hacks has also landed him in hot water — most recently with an article he wrote about Hugh Grant in the *Telegraph*'s arts pages. Although Cash boasts of being a close friend of Grant, his quotes from the actor had an oddly familiar ring: they were in fact lifted, word for word, from a *Los Angeles Times* profile of Grant published two weeks earlier.

Unfortunately for Cash he overlooked one thing: the author of the *LA Times* piece was David Gritten, who also writes regularly for the *Telegraph*'s arts pages. When Gritten saw his work in the *Torygraph* under Cash's by-line, he hit the roof and complained to arts editor Sarah Miller. Meanwhile, the *LA Times*'s lawyers, who take this sort of thing extremely seriously, are carefully studying the two pieces.

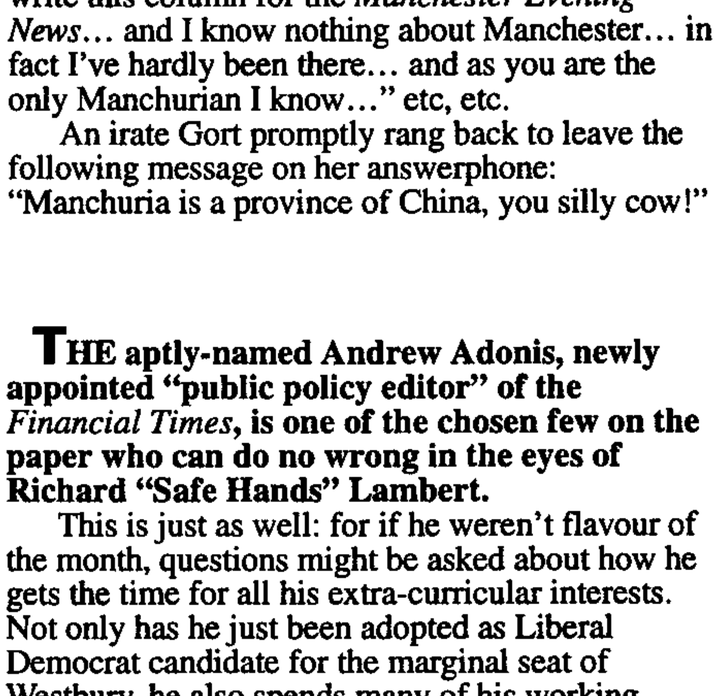
THE *Manchester Evening News*, looking for a woman feature writer, had the bright idea of hiring *Sunday Times* hackette Chrissie Iley, who had visited the city once and whose main claim to fame was giving bald actor Steven Berkoff a blow-job during an interview.

A desperate Iley rang Manchester arts promoter Sandy Gort and left a grovelling message on his answerphone, begging for help: "I've been asked to write this column for the *Manchester Evening News*... and I know nothing about Manchester... in fact I've hardly been there... and as you are the only Manchurian I know..." etc, etc.

An irate Gort promptly rang back to leave the following message on her answerphone: "Manchuria is a province of China, you silly cow!"

THE aptly-named Andrew Adonis, newly appointed "public policy editor" of the *Financial Times*, is one of the chosen few on the paper who can do no wrong in the eyes of Richard "Safe Hands" Lambert.

This is just as well: for if he weren't flavour of the month, questions might be asked about how he gets the time for all his extra-curricular interests. Not only has he just been adopted as Liberal Democrat candidate for the marginal seat of Westbury, he also spends many of his working hours selling his new book on the poll tax.



"We fired Clark Kent and got ourselves a celebrity columnist"

Private I-I-I!

THIS week's round-up of the nation's most egocentric columnists (based on the number of incidences of the word "I" in a single piece).

1	Zoë Heller (Independent on Sunday 20/11)	**49**
2	Zoë Heller (Independent on Sunday 27/11)	**39**
3	Bernard Levin (Times 15/11)	**33**
4	Barbara Toner (Mail on Sunday 20/11) . .	**32**
5	Michael Winner (Sunday Times 20/11) . .	**31**
6	John Diamond (Times 19/11)	**30**
7	Ruth Dudley Edwards (Independent 26/11)	**27**
8=	Peregrine Worsthorne (Sunday Telegraph 27/11)	**26**
8=	John Diamond (Times 26/11)	**26**
10	A.N. Wilson (Evening Standard 18/11) . .	**25**

Bubblin' under: Angela Lambert, Sebastian Faulks, William Donaldson, Dillie Keane.

(Thanks to B. Douglas)

While sitting at his computer in the *FT* office recently, he occupied himself by sending his co-authors — Tony Travers of the LSE and David Butler of Oxford University — a list of people who should be asked to review the book and/or invited to the launch party. Under the heading "Reviews", he noted: "Edward Pearce has agreed (to AA) to it for the *Statesman*. Here are suggestions for the broadsheets... Tyrie for the *FT* (he has agreed in principle and *I can fix things*)." Does the *FT* realise that authors of books are being allowed to "fix" their own reviews?

Meanwhile, from his perch at the *FT*, Adonis has been trying to entice the American computer tycoon Nicholas Negroponte to visit England next March. One purpose of the visit, he explains in his letter, would be "a lecture in London as part of a series organised by Demos — one of the UK's leading 'think tanks' — in association with *The Times* newspaper, on the implications of the communications revolution... *The Times* would print a summary of the lecture." Quite right. One wouldn't want the *FT* printing that atuff.

BRIAN SEWELL, the art world's answer to Richard Littlejohn, has returned to the columns of the *Evening Standard* following his recent heart attack. But the illness of "the critic they couldn't gag" seems to have affected his memory.

In a recent piece headed "Down With Bilge, Gush and Greed", he complained angrily that the "spiteful" Hayward Gallery had "dropped me from their press list as a response to savage comments and have never invited me to any of the international junkets in their gift".

This caused some surprise to the Hayward's press officer, Nigel Semmens. "Brian has used our telephones, summoned our bike service to deliver urgent packages, has received all press releases we have issued and has been invited to every single press view," the hurt Semmens wrote to the *Standard*. "We even sent him a get-well card during his recent illness."

Unsurprisingly, the *Standard* declined to publish the letter.

LADY Bollard is enjoying being a simple housewife again. She doesn't have to do all that boring editing but she can still use all the facilities of the *Daily Express*, courtesy of hubby Nick — chauffeur, secretary, etc.

However milady is considering taking up work again and has been planning a newspaper dummy for the Barclay twins, those exile zillionaires whose journalistic genius has already been proved by the fact they bought Robert Maxwell's *European*.

Could La Bollard's threatened association explain why David and Frederick, who can only be distinguished by their different hair partings, are building an impregnable £25 million top security mock Gothic castle on their Channel island of Brecqhou? Eve isn't that terrifying, is she?

HALLO!

THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! HAPPINESS at last for David Mellor, who has found a woman every bit as charming and witty as he is.

When the gracious Lady Legover (*shurely "Cobham"? Ed.*) was having her golden locks "highlighted" at Daniel Hercheson's salon in Conduit Street recently, a chatty colourist innocently remarked to the ambitious adulteress: "Blondes have more fun!"

Sadly, Lady C suffered a momentary sense of humour failure, and immediately complained about the lackey to the manager. Evidently a woman after David Mellor's body (*shurely "heart"? Ed.*)

HALLO! SEVERAL top members of the Lloyd's insurance market appear not entirely happy that the fragrant Mary Archer still chairs the hardship committee.

Their disquiet apparently follows revelations about her husband Jeffrey's curious dealings in shares of Anglia TV when she was a director there. However, when the chairman of Lloyd's David Rowland took her to one side and asked her if she thought she ought to resign, she replied: "Oh, I couldn't! That would mean Jeffrey is guilty!"

HALLO! WHEN *Private Eye* **rudely drew attention recently to the close association between Lord Rothschild and wine writer Hugh Johnson (*Eye* 852), Johnson was swift to deny the charge. "For the record," he wrote to the editor, "Lord Rothschild and I are not, and never have been, 'partners in a wine business', or any other business."**

A couple of weeks ago, however, The Marquesa received an invitation from Ben Howkins of the Royal Tokaji Wine Company to a party celebrating the launch of its 1990 vintage — "an invitation which Hugh Johnson and I very much hope you and your wine correspondent will be able to attend".

Hugh Johnson, it transpires, is a member of the "supervisory board" of the Royal Tokaji Wine Company. And what is the address in St James's Place from which the company operates? Why, the office of Lord Rothschild!

HALLO! WHO IS the biggest xenophobe in the cabinet? Michael Portillo, of course, is well-known for his fear and loathing of foreigners, but even Michael Heseltine seems to be at it now.

He recently delivered an astonishing display of disdain for dear old Johnny Darky at a CBI conference on Kenya, attended by half a dozen Kenyan cabinet ministers and president Daniel Arap Moi.

In his welcoming address, Tarzan pronounced the Kenyan president's name as if he were a schoolboy learning the French personal pronoun *moi*. The old dictator was not amused.

HALLO! *PRINCESS Anne has gracefully visited poor South Africa, now so tragically bereft of white leadership.*

Everywhere adoring and grateful black folk mob the charming Princess Royal, and when she visited a children's clinic in the squalid squatter-camp of Khayelitsha, outside Cape Town, adulation reached an overwhelming climax.

The leader of the women's welcoming committee explained their veneration to a baffled British embassy official: "Oh, we just love your Princess Di."

HALLO! TO CASTLE Ashford, Co Mayo, for an exciting "pre-hunting" clinic with the Princess Royal's ex, Mark Phillips, known to everyone inexplicably as "Captain Fog".

Alas, Mark's Sloany secretary Carolyn Sanders, known as "The Limpet", blotted her chances of becoming the second Mrs Fog. For despite equestrian Mark's known predilection for "serial mounting", Carolyn, it seems, threw an unseemly jealousy tantrum.

For covering the "event" for American television was delightful former Fog fancy, Irish journalist Mary Finnegan. Carolyn, fuelled by gallons of free champagne, pursued the Irish hackette into her bedroom, screaming. Astonished guests heard the unfortunate Mary pleading: "But it was all a long time ago!"

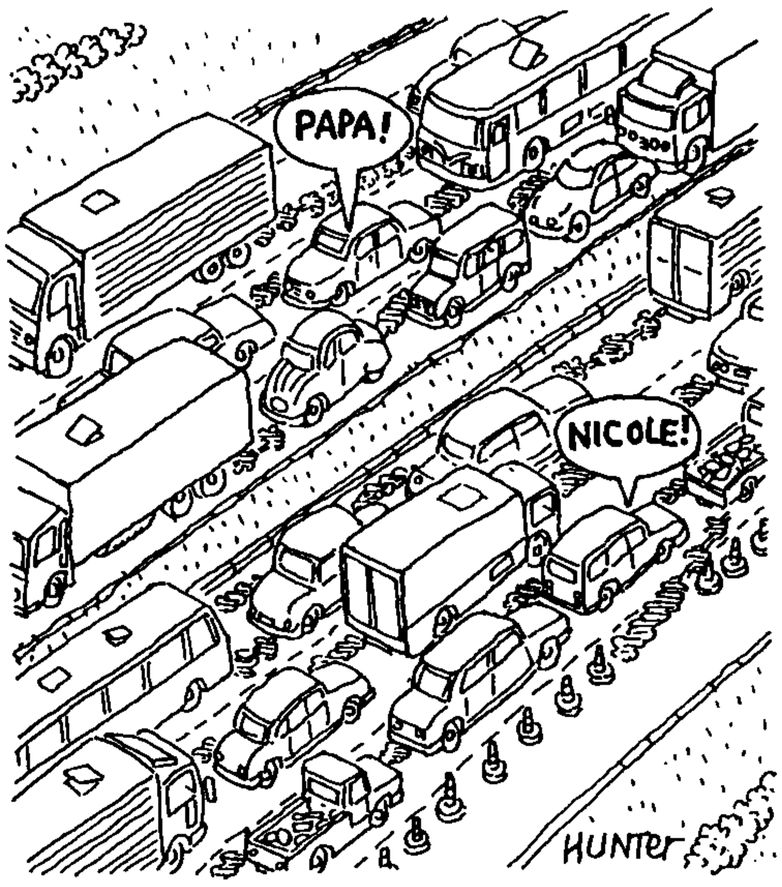
Other guests, who had paid £1,500 for the course, were less than amused to be filmed by CBS, especially one man who was accompanied by a lady who appeared not be his wife!

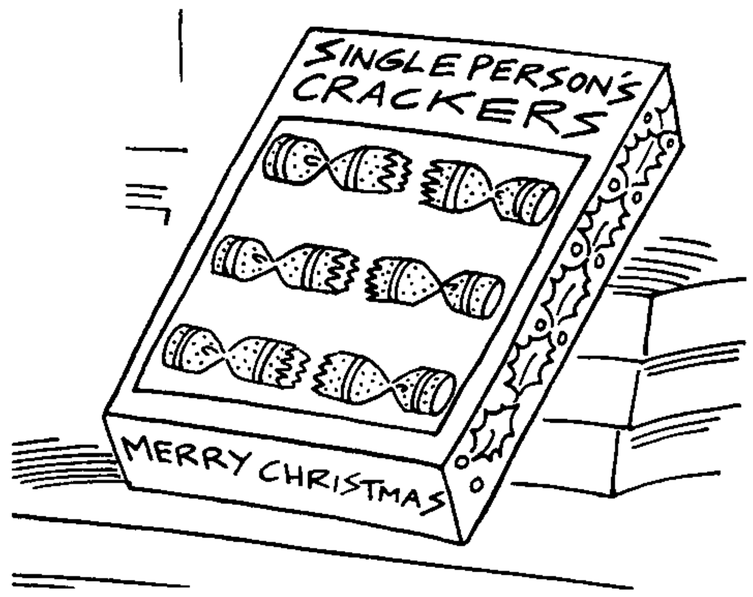
But all turned out well between Carolyn and Fog. On the last morning she descended for breakfast to announce loudly they had been forced to open all the windows in their room because: "It was so hot and steamy!"

HALLO! *TALKING of clever former army officers, the Marquesa hears more evidence of "Major" James Hewitt's gallantry.*

*Learning that first love Sarah Portley was about to sell her sordid story (*THE OLDER WOMAN WHO INTRODUCED DI'S MAJOR TO LOVE*), Hewitt phoned the trusting Portley and encouraged her to go ahead. He had only one condition: that Portley, 43, and eight years his senior, send them an "old photograph."*

How chivalrous! When the story appeared in the News of the World, Hewitt promptly cut off all communication with his lover of eight years. A principled stand!





HALLO! *FAME does have its drawbacks — even for one as beautiful and brilliant as Mariella Frostrup.*

Interviewed over lunch by Alex Games, a hack from the London Evening Standard's features department, Mariella was presented with an enormous bouquet of flowers.

As if this Arslikhan interview technique were not enough — Games sheepishly admitted the fashion editor had chosen the flowers for him — the lad then tried to ply Mariella with drink, but without success.

Eventually the embarrassed Games came clean about his intentions. "The *Standard* told me to proposition you," he mumbled.

Sadly Mariella refused his kind offer of a post-prandial legover, and has since explained to friends there is only one Standard hack whom she fancies: a "seasoned professional" whose "unmistakably rakish" manners she finds irresistible. Had the Standard sent him, she would have succumbed. And who was this handsome hunk? Step forward the irresistible Peter McLay (shurely "McLie"? Ed.)

HALLO! THE NEXT recruit to the ranks of the journalistic nobility is going to be none other than Max Hastings. Friends of the affectionately nicknamed "Hitler" are even now lobbying Downing Street — without, of course, Max's knowledge — in the hope of persuading Major to give the editor of the *Telegraph* a peerage.

This would mean that Lord Hitler of Hastings would have to retire, but surely that is a small price to pay for joining the Tory elite? Welcome indeed!

GOODBYE!

HALLO! JEFFREY ARCHER must have shed a tear when reading obituaries of former Tory MP Humphry Berkeley, once his boss at the United Nations Association.

It was while working as a UNA fundraiser that Jeffrey's talent for fiction emerged. There was the famous expenses claim he wrote in 1968 charging the charity for lunch with Dr Michael Hooker and for travel to Hertfordshire. The industrialist had not only paid, but loaned his chauffeur too! It was the same at the Savoy and Carlton Towers when Jeffrey charged for two feasts with Lord Luke, the UNA treasurer. Oddly, Lord Luke also paid!

Jeffrey had to pay back 69 expenses claims in all, and — most unfair, this — when he was the Con. candidate in Louth in 1969 Berkeley circulated details of his fiddles! Archer was only allowed to stand after promising Tory central office he'd sue (he settled secretly in 1973 at the door of the high court, withdrawing his action and paying all costs, then a massive £18,000). All of which reminds one of Berkeley's cruel joke about Jeffrey: that "he shouldn't be in Parliament. He should be in a remand home!"

The Marquesa

IN THE TEAROOM

"I PASSED one of those beggars on the stairs," said one Tory biscuit. "...thought he was one of those homeless persons... Gave him a shilling."

With shoulders back and nose in the air, Conservatives are usually adept at brushing past indigents. But lately it's been impossible to ignore the figures creeping along the corridors importuning signatures for a leadership election.

The latest stalking horse is a lovable high Tory with an indemnified record of raving eccentricity. What was offered was Norman Lamont — aka "the man who got us into this mess in the first place" or "Mr Failed Business, Mr Negative Equity, Mr ERM". As a horse, he's been not so much stalking as whinnying loudly from his stable.

The cards are out along with the cabinet suicide pact, with calculated words on what life after Major might be like. "He's not *entirely* clapped out, but he'd hardly unite the party on Europe. Nor would Clarke," was the view.

And what of Heseltine? He wouldn't be afraid to cut public spending, especially welfare, so surely he was just the ticket? "It's one thing tripping over the scruffies on the way to the opera, quite another having them camping down the drive. Look what's been going on at Michael Howard's house." The majority feeling is best give the police another year to practise creating grotty gobbos under the criminal justice act before increasing the numbers of homeless beggars on our streets.

'Urquhart'

THE government's claim to be the party of law and order is set to look even shabbier — much to the delight of the coke barons of Bogota.

Customs and excise bosses, it emerges, want to lop 600 staff from the front line of the fight against drug smuggling. In a recent letter to David Heathcoat-Amory, paymaster general, Valerie Strachan, who heads the customs and excise board, says: "The staffing levels will fall from 25,262 to April 1 1996 to just under 20,500 by the end of the 1996s." Crucial to the tricky issue is the proposal to [illegible] people from anti-smuggling drugs work.

Even as he was [illegible] to the government's catalogue of cuts, Heathcoat-Amory wrote to Jonathan Aitken, chief secretary to the treasury: "Cuts of this size will be difficult to present in the context of the government's anti-drugs strategy. I propose to make as small part of the saving to increased drugs [illegible] work (50 staff)."

Strachan's [illegible] package will "save" £92 million a year — but think what it'll do to the balance of payments to Colombia.

LABOUR energy spokesman Martin O'Neill livened up a dull old Coal Industry Society conference when he announced: "While we envisage a national role for coal in our energy strategy, we do not intend to renationalise the industry."

Ooops. The next day a furious John Cunningham, Labour's trade and industry overlord, dashed into Tony Blair's office white with rage complaining that O'Neill had no right to change party policy — not without consulting him, anyway.

When it was explained to O'Neill what he had done wrong, he wrote to the *Grauniad*, which had reported his speech, saying: "Your report is inaccurate and misleading. There has been no change in Labour's policy. Our policy remains exactly as it was when John Smith was leader."

In fact O'Neill had been reading a prepared text, a copy of which has reached the *Eye*. It uses the very words quoted above ("We do not intend to renationalise the industry"). And Labour's previous policy was spelt out in the Commons last March: "The Labour party is committed to the reintroduction of public ownership of the coal industry." The speaker? Martin O'Neill.

ENERGY minister Tim Eggar ate a large helping of humble pie when he dined at the Royal Society recently.

Originally he was to read out an obituary for wave power in Britain. Instead he had to congratulate scientist Trevor Whittaker, whose pioneering work Eggar himself had done so much to scupper.

Not only had Whittaker won a prize from fellow scientists for his work in building a wave power station on Islay in the Inner Hebrides, but a company in Inverness had decided to put up money which entitled him to further funds from Brussels with which to build a new station.

Eye readers will recall how Brussels had been forced to withdraw its original offer when Eggar would stump up precisely nothing for the Whittaker project (the European Union cannot invest if projects don't receive matching funding from the host country).

PRIVATISATION NEWS

DESPITE massive local opposition the government last year privatised Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE), selling off both the supply network and the generating stations.

To reflect NIE's new competitive position in the private sector, its directors immediately received pay rises of up to 33 percent. Similarly, staff who work in NIE shops selling electrical goods, processing payments and trying to avoid being assaulted by customers furious at the size of their bills, also saw an adjustment to their salaries to ensure the company's survival in the free market: a 20 percent cut in take home pay.

MPs might raise these points and also ask what happened to the £23 million pre-privatisation surplus in NIE's funds?

Pre-School Nursery Facility Rhymes

GREAT POLITICAL FIGURES OF OUR TIME

Mr Roy Hattersley, as seen by Mr Jeremy Hanley

TORY party chairman Jeremy Hanley was over the moon when he was invited by the former Labour deputy leader Roy Hattersley to lunch at an expensive West End restaurant.

The lunch was paid for by the *Mail on Sunday*, for whose magazine Hattersley had agreed to write a profile of the new Tory chairman. Hardly had Hattersley returned to his office in the Commons than a hand-written note from Hanley was delivered to him.

Oozing bonhomie and good cheer, the chairman thanked Hattersley most warmly for the marvellous lunch and especially for the witty and delightful conversation. It ended by expressing the rather embarrassing view that it had been Hanley's special pleasure to be so closely associated with "one of the great political figures of our time".

When the profile finally appeared, Hanley phoned David English, editor-in-chief at the *Mail*, roundly denounced the article and insisted Hattersley should be sacked.

Mr John Major as seen by Mr David Hunt

THOSE who wonder at the dwindling fortunes in the cabinet of the Rt Hon David Hunt should recall the following story.

On the cold November night four years ago when John Major was elected leader of the Tory party, the television companies set up a portakabin in Parliament Square to record the views of MPs about the new prime minister.

Half-way through the evening the waiting interviewees were surprised to see a face squashed up against the window. It was the Rt Hon David Hunt begging to be allowed in for an interview. On air, Mr Hunt was beaming. "John Major," he intoned, "will, I predict, turn out to be one of the great political figures of our time." This forecast was rather spoiled by a Labour frontbencher who blurted out: "Why did you vote for Heseltine then?"

Curiously, Mr Hunt had no reply.

'Backbiter'

EYE WINTER SLEAZE COMPETITION

HAMPERLOADS of readers sent in speech bubbles for our photograph of Prince Charles and Mohamed Fayed — some arriving by fax on House of Commons headed notepaper.

The winner is Ernie Crosswell from Slough for the following one-liner:

Fayed to Charles: "Tell me, how did your Dad manage to get British citizenship?"

Henry Porter of west London submitted a corker:

Prince Charles: It is time we had a new name for the House of Windsor.

Fayed: May I suggest House of Fraser, Sir?

But Porter had to be disqualified for not declaring his interest as someone who is married to Sally Deedes, late of *Private Eye*.

NOOKS and CORNERS

"HOW d'ye like Edinburgh?" asked Sir Walter Scott of the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon; " 'It is a dream of great genius', said I. 'Well done', said Sir Walter." Well done indeed: Edinburgh is one of the great cities of the world: an extraordinary fusion of wild landscape and urban order. The trouble with the place, as any Glaswegian will tell you, is its inhabitants, who have made the Athens of the North the best justification for the neutron bomb.

Look what has happened to the place: the making of Princes Street into a run of cheap concrete and glass; New St Andrew's House and the St James's Centre wrecking the top of Leith Street; the demolition of George Square. Of course all these vile deeds happened in the 1960s when a crime wave swept Britain; but while the other cities which ripped out their hearts did it because they were ashamed, Edinburgh always knew it was special and superior. Nor are recent efforts much better: the Sheraton Hotel in Lothian Road is as worthless a piece of Post-Modern trash as might be found in Detroit or Basingstoke.

But now, at last, we are told, Edinburgh has woken up out of its long cultural sleep. The city has made great efforts — in vain — to be chosen as the Arts Council's City of Architecture and Design in 1999. After decades of indecision, an opera house has been created and a £30 million whizzy architecture centre is to be built, while Terry Farrell has been wheeled in to design a conference centre and the fashionable American posturing superstar, Richard Meier, asked to

CHARLOTTE SQUARE

"masterplan" Edinburgh Park out at South Gyle.

Edinburgh has, in fact, gone for designer-label architecture to put itself back on the map. A pity, therefore, that its city fathers have forgotten about the best name of all, Robert Adam, who gave Edinburgh the Register House, the Old College of the University and (half of) Charlotte Square.

This is one of the two open spaces at either end of George Street which articulate the urban grid of Edinburgh's Georgian "New Town". It was laid out in the 1790s after the lord provost had asked Adam to prepare designs "not much ornamented but with an elegant simplicity...". Only the north side was built before the French wars stopped work, but the square was finished off in 1820 with exquisitely plain stone terraces.

Charlotte Square is listed category "A" and is the finest urban square in Scotland, arguably in Britain. Sad, therefore, that it was long ago taken over by lawyers and civil servants. Even sadder that Edinburgh district council has just given planning permission for the redevelopment of 26-28 Charlotte Square: for what Messrs Helical Bar and their architects, the Michael Laird Partnership, wish to do is to cram a massive five-floor extension with a glazed atrium into the lane behind.

This over-development contravenes the central Edinburgh local plan and contradicts the recent decision by the planning committee to refuse consent to a "backland" development nearby on the corner of George Street and Castle Street as "detrimental to the character of a conservation area".

The reason for letting Helical Bar do their worst is fear, for Charlotte Square is in decline. The solicitors are leaving as the houses are not suitable as modern commercial premises. Of course they are not: they ought to be houses again and lived in; but the Edinburgh councillors want businesses back as they pay more in rates.

But who is to blame for the evacuation of Charlotte Square? Why, Edinburgh district council — for creating Edinburgh Park and other hideous shopping centres and business parks half way to the airport. It is there that money and business are fleeing. Of course the good people of Edinburgh are proud of their city, but when it comes to shopping and using their cars they would clearly rather be somewhere out on the M25.

Such is the not-to-be City of Architecture and Design: dying in its magnificent heart because of the stupid policies of its district council and planning committee. And if Helical Bar are allowed to stuff as much office accommodation in as they can squeeze behind a heritage facade, then why not elsewhere in the New Town?

As Edinburgh's conscience, the Cockburn Association, argues: "If we allow the rear gardens to be completely built over with substantial alterations to the listed buildings, then it is easy to foresee a situation when a future developer will be arguing for the complete destruction of the buildings, retaining the facade only and incorporating massive roof extensions..."

A city of architecture and design, indeed.

BUT it is not only in Edinburgh that officials shoot the city in the foot: its hated rival on the Clyde is no better. Glasgow, in its own successful bid to be favoured by the Arts Council, has argued that it will improve design through public participation.

A sick joke this, when the greatest power in the city is an unelected quango, the Glasgow Development Agency, which secures its objectives through the bait of dollops of (taxpayers') money.

This secretive clique of Armani-suited executives has recently decided to scupper a popular and viable commercial plan to make the Garden Festival site by the Clyde into Tivoli Gardens and maritime museum in favour of a third-rate business park by the interestingly ubiquitous Miller Group.

Such is the City of Architecture and Design, 1999.

'Piloti'

Pseuds Corner

933-60 The weight, density of reference and sophistication of this and the following speeches accords them a major status in Molière's linguistic parody. They appear as *morceaux de bravoure* in the general argument. (See introduction p.xiv.) Tartuffe initially adapts the teleological argument (cf. *Dom Juan* III, i) whereby the created object is deemed to reflect the design of the creator (933-44); there follows a deformation of neo-platonic theory, according to which earthly love is represented as a stage on the way to the perfect love of God (945-52); finally (953-60) there is introduced a sequence of Petrarchan* imagery (the gift of the heart [953-4] — an area also exploited in the widespread contemporary devotion to the Sacred Heart), and a Jansenist tone of passivity (955-6), before a further intrusion of metaphysical language leads to the climactic isocolon*(960).

RICHARD PARISH
Notes to Bristol Classical Press edition of Molière's *Le Tartuffe*

The woman with the zebra's penis (University College London)

...Rigid Western gender models of a hierarchised "masculine"/"feminine", correlated with biological sex, do not adequately deal with this anomaly... contextualised with ethnography on ritual and myth, an ideal model of gendered symbolic oppositions will be presented. Gender is seen to be mutable through time and correlated with ritual potency, not biological sex. This syntactical analysis matches predictions of a neo-Darwinian model for symbolic cultural origins based in changing female reproductive strategies.

Theoretical Archaeology Group annual conference, University of Bradford

One of my treats when we go there (Languedoc) now is to hang out the washing. There's this wonderful novelty of having the time to take out a basket of washing and get it blown by the fresh air. You can play at your French house far more than you can at your London one.

JANCIS ROBINSON
Sunday Times

So God is bound to matter, the Word constantly undulating into our orbit, through oodles of space and time, space known NOW as not empty, but full of atmosphere, with just the right pressure to impregnate with Spirit, so the Word can tell with a human mouth.

What a marvel a mouth is. Shut up or open. A million works it performs. Lipsteethtonguegums; glandsalivaswallowspeak; suckchewspitwhistle; pursekiss—thirst and taste. Taste. So much is a manner of taste. Taste matters, but's so easily missed, when what's popped passed over to be swallowed up too soon.

FR TONY SLINGO
Catholic Pictorial

Brunch (with Danielle May) might start with a tabouleh salad (couscous with cucumber, tomato, mint, lemon juice and toasted pine-nuts), followed by venison chilli with black beans and coriander. "The recipe comes from Stars restaurant in San Francisco."

Isn't chilli a bit, well, studenty for foodies?
"Oh no, this is an ironic chilli."

Independent

Zelda Cheetle Gallery
John Blakemore *The Stilled Gaze*. The tulip is a flower of sensual and gestural elegance, of constant transformation, worthy of contemplation, of prolonged and intensive scrutiny. The sustained working and reworking, which is so much a part of Blakemore's practice, brings references through which the tulip can function both as object of celebration and as metaphor. 1 Nov-2 Dec.

CLICK
'Photography in the nineties', Guardian

CONTRIBUTORS: J. Swallow, A. Pollard, J. James, C. Jackson and M. Murton, M. Green, A. Tarrant.

£10 paid for entries

TV

Reg Sanders (BBC2)
The Midnight Hour (BBC2)
National Lottery (BBC1)

LET US introduce you to a new late-night television star. He is Reg Sanders. Few viewers are around to discover this but — just before the BBC network closes down for the night — the BBC continuity announcers are allowed 15 seconds of fame: to reveal a little of their personality to the small surviving audience of insomniacs and glassy-eyed fanatics.

The announcers still can't be seen — must still be hidden behind the big white number of their channel's identity card — but they are permitted to show themselves a little emotionally.

"This is Reg Sanders in London," says Reg (for it is revealed to be he), "wishing you on behalf of all tonight's team on BBC2 a very safe and restful night's sleep. Goodnight."

Poor old Reg. These days he's getting to bed even later than normal, delivering his personality monologue to still fewer viewers. The reason is **The Midnight Hour**, a new really-late-night Monday-Thursday live political discussion programme on BBC2.

The Midnight Hour has had a considerable amount of publicity, because of the presence on the presenter's roster of Andrew Neil. Celebrities and politicians who have been turned over by the newspapers might like to examine the way in which the press deals with a story involving one of its own.

Objectively, what has happened is that Brillo went off to America with the declared intention of anchoring a peak-time American network news show. Failing to achieve this, he has ended up back in London presenting a "review of the parliamentary day" (the show's *Radio Times* billing) which goes out after *The Late Show*, a slot which must be the television equivalent of being posthumous. Yet, oddly, this reversal has been written about in terms of "challenging media opportunities in Britain", "major new BBC current affairs role" and so on.

Without the Neil angle, there might have been a bit more journalistic inquiry into why exactly *The Midnight Hour* has been invented. The corporation has now managed to contrive a situation in which the last two and a half hours of weekday schedules — from 10.30 to 1am — are filled with studio-based talk: *Newsnight*, *The Late Show*, *The Midnight Hour*. After dark, BBC2 has become all mouth and no rousers.

The really strange thing about *The Midnight Hour* is that the BBC has increased the quantity of politicians on television at the precise moment of a general cultural revulsion against politicians. This is bad enough, but — in constructing a political chat show that begins at midnight — you limit your guests to the really desperate politicians: the stars have either already done *Newsnight* or are getting some kip before *Today*.

Thus, on his debut night last Thursday, Brillo was able to assemble the glittering line-up of Ian Duncan-Smith MP; Sir Geoffrey Pattie, a Tory party vice-president; Lady Blackstone; *Telegraph* hack Anne Seigal; and a Labour party aide called either Michael Brown or Michael Bryan, his surname a little obscured by Brillo's brogue.

The level of conversation you get from this level of guest was demonstrated by the fact that John Bryan or John Brown managed to get two of the most crashing political clichés — "turkeys voting for Christmas" and "if they don't hang together, they'll hang separately" — into the same sentence.

Brillo himself was fine, although early nervousness led him fatally to mistime the opening sentence. What he wanted to say was: "Welcome to *The Midnight Hour*. (Pause) It's been dubbed the suicide pact of the century — John Major's decision..." etc. What he in fact said was: "Welcome to *The Midnight Hour*. It's been called the suicide pact of the century. (Pause)..."

Well, yes, it certainly is being called that in many parts of the BBC2. Nobody can work out what John Birt — whose personal idea the series is — is up to.

The Square Eyes theory is that the BBC brass are so embarrassed by their tacky **National Lottery** show on BBC1 — a shameless attempt to get the highest audience possible — that *The Midnight Hour* is a compensatory attempt to get the lowest audience possible. If Birt gets cornered by press or politicians about the first show, he'll point to the second one.

This is the only plausible explanation for the unlikely late-night double-act of Reg Sanders and Andrew Neil.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

DESPITE a new editor, some things never change — like the *Sunset Times*'s respect for satellite TV.

Amid gigantic ads promising a Stalinist Christmas on Sky (cf the posters of Uncle Joe urging punters to "join the October revolution"), space can often be found in the business section to plug the forthcoming share float and, on the TV pages, to promote top-notch shows like American tag-team wrestling.

On the news front, meanwhile, the rag has been eager to investigate one of Rupert Murdoch's major competitors, Sony Pictures Entertainment. Under headlines like HOLLYWOOD DREAM TURNS TO NIGHTMARE FOR SONY and LAST ACTION ZERO, it reported how the Japanese giant had been humbled by "a string of costly flops" and singled out the "Arnold Schwarzenegger romp *Last Action Hero* which failed to pull in the crowds".

A large colour photo of gun-wielding Arnie on the front of the business section rammed home the point under the heading SONY BILLIONS BLOWN AWAY IN TINSELTOWN, and on an inside page was the sad news that the film "cost $124 million to make and promote and has recouped barely half that".

But has the *ST*, er, blown away its own foot? *Last Action Hero* is certainly a crap movie — which is probably why it's the big Christmas draw on Sky's Movie Channel, and why it's being plugged like crazy everywhere else in in the Murdoch empire.

WHILE BSkyB's current advertising campaign assures potential shareholders that the satellite station is a happy ship sailing on a sea of prosperity, staff at the company's subscriber management centre (SMC) in Livingston, Scotland, have a rather different story to tell.

The predominant management philosophy is one of fear. Most employees are hired on temporary contracts, and they live in constant trepidation of receiving "the call" — the phone call at home one evening which tells them not to return the following day. No explanation is ever offered. Temporary staff, some of whom have more than 12 months' service, are now so nervous that many of them won't answer the telephone in the evenings in case they are on the hit list. They have no unions, no overtime pay, no unsocial working hour rates and no management-staff consultation. They must also work public holidays at standard rates of pay — and, since they are all hired through an employment agency in Edinburgh, they lose 12 per cent of their wages in agency fees.

JOKE OF THE WEEK

WHAT is the essential difference between the two share issues recently announced for Railtrack and BSkyB? One is a collection of rotten stations... the other's a railway.

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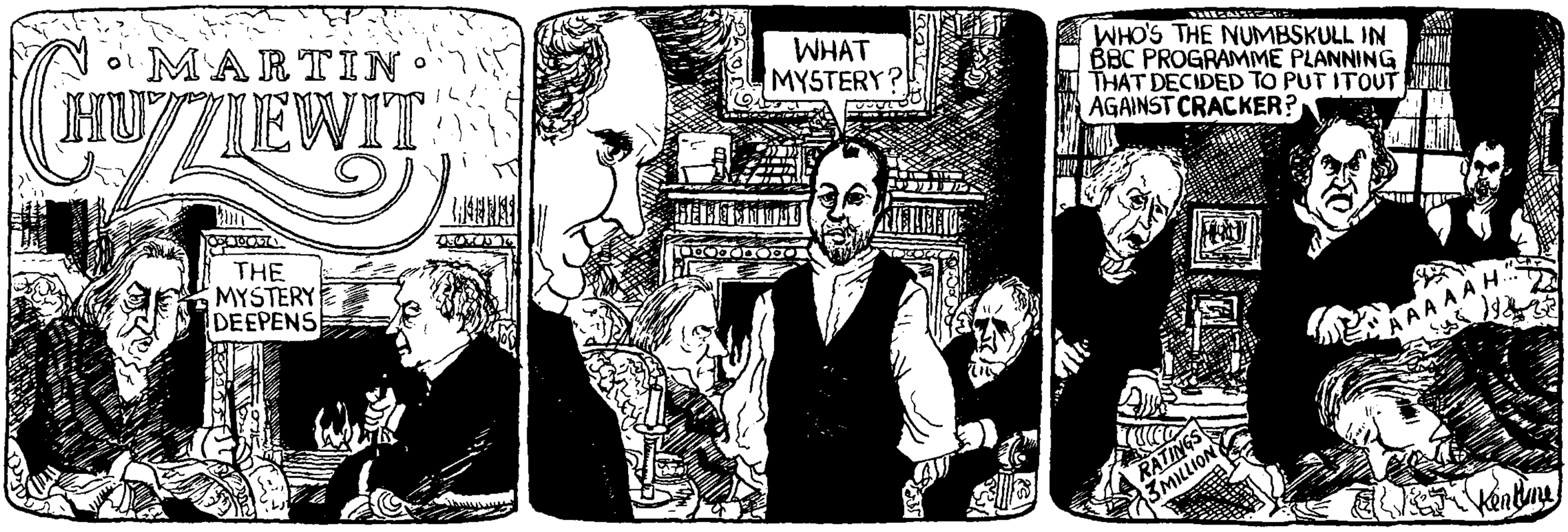

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT
THE MYSTERY DEEPENS
WHAT MYSTERY?
WHO'S THE NUMBSKULL IN BBC PROGRAMME PLANNING THAT DECIDED TO PUT IT OUT AGAINST CRACKER?
AAAAAH...
RATINGS 3 MILLION

THE exposure of John Birt's tax avoidance scheme at the BBC, for which as far as anyone can tell he was never brought to book, has unleashed a fresh assault by the Inland Revenue on his demoralised staff.

Corporation employees who once grew fat on wining and dining one another at the licence-payers' expense now find themselves being taxed if they consume so much as a vol-au-vent at an official BBC reception.

An assortment of TV types, required to attend the opening of the Arabic section of the BBC's Television World Service, have been shopped by their own employers to the revenue for receiving a *"benefit" at the gathering* — in the form of warm wine and curly sandwiches. Each guest has received a memo from the BBC "Taxable Payments and Benefits" department in Cardiff, warning them that "as a result of information taken from expense claim number 000434108 submitted for payment by Rashi Y Al-Moula, you have incurred a taxable benefit of £1.43 as you received hospitality at the opening of the Arabic Service editing suites on 21/10/94. This advice is to inform you that this sum together with any cumulo total will be reported to the Inland Revenue as a benefit in kind at the end of the 1994/95 tax year."

One consequence of this policy is a sudden reluctance by corporation staff to attend colleagues' leaving parties. BBC hacks who were recently invited by their leader, Tony "Head Prefect" Hall, to an official bash marking the retirement of BBC Northern Ireland controller Robin Walsh at Quaglino's have now been relieved of £64.82 each for the "taxable benefit".

BIRTSPEAK

MEMO:
To The Late Show
From Ian White
Re: Office Layout/Design
Dear Late Show,

A brief introduction to ask for your much needed comments and help in providing an appropriate layout and management of both your desking/personal storage and access to general office systems.

I shall be on site during the next six/eight weeks to manage and install a new filing/storage system from which you may all benefit. This may incorporate some reconfiguration of desking.

AFTER Leo Enright, one of the BBC's Dublin correspondents, hysterically predicted for the benefit of licence fee payers throughout the UK that the Northern Ireland peace process was in danger, BBC Northern Ireland (which has its own Dublin staff) declined to broadcast Enright's reports.

This was perfectly reasonable because when Enright broke his "story" on Radio 4's *World at One* he claimed a specific individual had been told by IRA and loyalist paramilitaries that the peace process was in danger. Strangely later reports broadcast from London claimed that "sources" plural had provided the information.

Suspicions grew that Enright had been set up by a well known figure in Dublin political circles, the intention being that the BBC story would be picked up by London newspapers and put pressure on Irish coalition partner Dick Spring not to pull the plug on prime minister Albert Reynolds.

BBC Northern Ireland decided not to broadcast Enright's story on regional radio or TV, even though it was leading network bulletins from London. Alas, the willingness of the BBC's Belfast press office to rubbish Enright's material and point out that it hadn't been used within the region has been misinterpreted by the news directorate's high command in London as a dangerous outbreak of dissent. The usual Stalinist internal review is underway.

THE BBC's latest desperate grope for ratings is *Hail Caesar* on BBC2, a phone-in for drunks enjoying a biriani after chucking-out time on a Friday night.

"Caesar", alias Caesar the Boogieman, alias Kiss FM disc jockey Chris Ryder, is a flabby loudmouth who makes Richard Littlejohn and James Whale sound like intellectuals, and this latest contribution to John Birt's "Mission to Explain" has left even BBC loyalists crying into their "vision statements".

BBC2 controller Michael Jackson has ordered an inquiry after the programme's trial broadcast included nothing but "hang 'em, flog 'em and cor what big tits they've got" diatribes. The high point came when Caesar told off caller "Sarah from Essex" for "staying up this late when you're just 14" and was roundly put in his place. "It was your researcher who rung me up and asked me to phone in!" the Essex girl replied.

And what explains a mini tirade by Caesar against the police? It surely can't have anything to do with a record the DJ himself holds — and not a 12" plastic one. Last year Caesar was convicted of deceiving a couple out of money intended for charity. This came on top of a string of previous offences including burglary and possessing an air rifle in a public place — just the sort of chap licence payers want to fund.

RUMOURS are rife that Margaret Thatcher's former darling, the former TV-am boss Bruce Gyngell, could be the next chief executive at Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television (YTTTV).

If so, he will feel at home in Leeds: the company has already summarily sacked technicians who refused to sign new contracts which abolished overtime pay.

But what of YTTTV's sacked chief executive Clive Leach? He was paid off after the debacle of over-selling airtime to advertisers; and it was he who presided over Yorkshire's crippling £38 million a year franchise bid, plus another £15 million for Tyne Tees.

Good to see his business expertise is not being wasted. Despite his sacking 12 months ago, Leach retains his post as chairman of the training and enterprise council in Leeds.

GOOD KING SENSELESSNESS

THE sophisticated news programme *London Tonight* loves a kiss 'n' tell story. Sometimes.

When its eager cameraman Jonathan Smith turned up to one of the biggest diary events of the London calendar — the illumination of the Regent Street Christmas lights — he jostled with fellow paparazzi for the best shot of the assembled non-celebs.

When a policeman told them to move on, however, Smith was annoyed by the officer's abrasive manner and he turned round and blew a kiss in the bobby's face. This was nearly the end of the *London Tonight* coverage. Smith was arrested for disorderly behaviour and was then locked up in a cell for several hours to cool off.

CHARITY NEWS

HAS sleaze now insinuated itself into the once virtuous world of charities?

Eight national charities have formed a pressure group called Libertas, which aims to improve access to museums and heritage sites for disabled people. Inquiries about the group are addressed to one Sir John Cox, who is listed as a consultant.

This vice-admiral, a chum of the chairman of the group, Lord Rix, lists among his charitable duties the responsibility for contracting audio tour companies to make tapes for Libertas.

Nineteen museums and heritage sites got audio tours last year, and such prestigious sites as the Cutty Sark, Kenilworth Castle, and Yorkshire Sculpture Park have agreed to stage tours. Almost all the venues use tapes made by the same audio company — Soundalive Tours Limited — which seems to have the market wrapped up. This must mean it is a jolly good company, which its director, Sir John Cox, KCB, would no doubt attest.

MEDIA MYSTERY

HUSBAND-AND-WIFE scriptwriters Charlotte Bingham and Terence Brady once wrote a sitcom called *No Honestly*. But a story about la Bingham in the *Mail on Sunday* two weeks ago seems to have been conspicuously short on, er, honesty.

The two-page news feature described how Bingham had thought she was being followed by a carload of sinister men while driving alone through Wiltshire one night. Although she had rung the police on her carphone, no help had been forthcoming. She was left "alone and vulnerable on an isolated country lane in the dead of night".

As soon as the piece appeared, Avon and Somerset police launched an inquiry — and swiftly discovered that Bingham had not been "alone" at all: her husband was also in the car. Understandably peeved, Inspector Knacker demanded a correction and apology from the newspaper. Last Sunday, the *Mail* duly printed a statement from its ombudsman, Chris Rees: "This error of fact should have been avoided and the newspaper should not have published this fundamental inaccuracy."

What the ombudsman did not say was who was to blame. And no wonder: it is one of the most impenetrable mysteries of modern times.

Charlotte Bingham has no doubts. She says that she never claimed she was alone; the detail was invented by the three *Mail* executives in charge of the story, Rod "Hokey Cokey" Gilchrist, Paul Palmer and Andy Bull.

Bollocks, reply Messrs Gilchrist, Palmer and Bull. They insist the entire article was read out to her before publication, and although she corrected many minor facts she never mentioned that her husband had been with her.

Bollocks, says Bingham. Although she and her husband had been promised that they could see the article, they never did. And the passages which were read to them over the phone didn't include the rather crucial allegation about her being "alone and vulnerable".

The *Mail* men retaliate by pointing out that the article carried the byline of Candida Ogilvy — who, as we revealed in the last *Eye*, is the daughter of Charlotte Bingham and Terence Brady. Surely, they argue, she would hardly have put her name to the piece without clearing it with her parents?

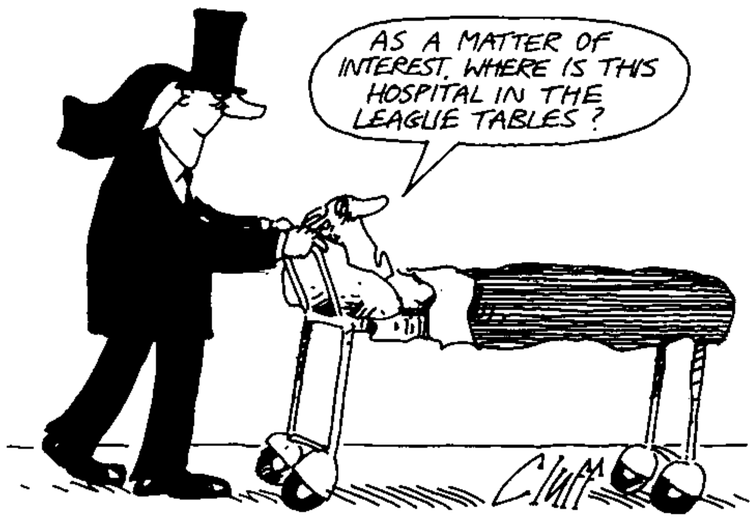
Bingham and Brady have an answer to this as well. They say that Candida Ogilvy did not write the article. Her name was added to it against her will — and only after she had been warned that she would be sacked if she refused.

In return, the *Mail* points out that Rod Gilchrist, who was editing the paper that week, is an old friend of the Brady-Bingham family; indeed he was a guest at their daughter's wedding. On the day before the article appeared, they say, he had a most amicable telephone conversation with Terence Brady, during which he discussed a script that Brady and Bingham are writing for the *Mail*'s TV production company, New Era.

More bollocks, according to Brady. "He didn't mention the New Era script. That's completely mendacious." He rang Gilchrist on the Saturday because he had just discovered that the article was going to allege that Bingham had been on her own in the car. It was certainly not an amicable chat. He backed it up with a fax warning Gilchrist that "we cannot give our consent to the piece you propose to publish as it is woefully full of misquotes and inaccuracies."

In spite of this evidence, the *Mail* continues to maintain that it received "no complaint" from Brady or Bingham before publication.

So who is telling the truth? The *Mail*'s ombudsman has, so far, understandably ducked the question. But if he doesn't address it soon, it may instead have to be decided by a high court jury. Charlotte Bingham is now consulting m'learned friends.



DOING THE ROUNDS

WORKING in a practice that has always been too small to qualify for the iniquitous benefits of GP fundholding, MD often finds himself — or herself — having to explain the subtleties of the system to his — or her — patients.

An 82-year-old man with crippling arthritis was first referred by MD to Mr McMinn at **Birmingham's** doomed **Royal Orthopaedic hospital** in November 1993. Five weeks later, he received notification of his initial outpatient appointment: "We cannot give you a specific date because the current waiting list is 26 weeks. We will let you know nearer the time."

Six *months* later, he was finally seen by Mr McMinn who put him on another lengthy waiting list for a hip replacement. At the end of September (1994), MD received a letter from Mr McMinn to say that he was jumping ship from the ROH to work at the private **Birmingham Nuffield hospital**. "This has, as I am sure you will understand, been a most painful decision which was arrived at after long consideration."

However, all was not lost. "The Nuffield will provide rapid access to a high quality orthopaedic service for NHS patients. There will be NO additional cost to the NHS compared with treatment in other orthopaedic units in Birmingham... I would be very happy to provide treatment for your patient at the Nuffield within two months (subject to funding approval), and I have written to him to ask that he discuss this with you. With your agreement, I can transfer his care to the Nuffield and arrange for a DHA contract if appropriate."

After our discussion, the patient decided he would like to stick with Mr McMinn and switch hospitals. In due course, MD received a letter from Pam Charles, business manager at the Nuffield, saying that as the practice wasn't fundholding, she had sought funding from Mr J. Amphlett, purchasing manager for the acute team at **South Birmingham health authority** (£50 million in debt) and that subject to his approval, the patient would be treated "*within 5 weeks*"!

Funding was naturally refused, and the 82-year-old man with crippling arthritis is now back at the ROH under a new consultant with a new waiting list. The West Midlands is now the only region in Britain to record increases in both its 12- and 24-month waiting lists: but Andrew Thomas, acting medical director at ROH, remains optimistic: "We are currently negotiating substantial additional funds from region to ensure that all our patients are treated within nine months of being added to the waiting list." And, er, pigs might fly out of MD's arse.

● THE UK central council for nursing, midwifery and health visiting has finally dispensed with the services of £80,000-a-year chief executive Colin Ralph, who has been upsetting staff since April (*Eyes passim*).

The council denies Mr Ralph was sacked; rather his position had become "untenable". He is to remain on the pay-roll until a severance award has been agreed (probably £80,000). The internal investigation into his activities has already cost £48,000 and the reorganisation costs following his departure will add a further £40,000 to the bill.

● A STUDY of the competence of NHS managers in 11 **Welsh** hospitals has revealed that many cannot read a balance sheet and have no idea how the GP fundholding scheme works.

Most scored lower in a financial awareness questionnaire than the doctors they manage, and many admitted to having a poor grasp of what is required of them: 58 percent were unable to budget for the impact of inflation and 96 percent had no idea how to account for depreciation of buildings and other fixed assets. As GP Dr Peter Holden put it: "Some would not get a job outside the NHS, but they are not universally bad."

● THE much-publicised collapse of community care may not be the **Isle of Wight's** only problem. The island's health commission has hired Stuart Dickens, a private consultant for Dearden Management Consultants, to conduct a review of its services.

Mr Dickens was previously chief executive of **South Birmingham health authority** when it was accused by the Commons public accounts committee of concealing debts of £13.2 million (*Eyes passim*). A further £3 million had to be written off because SBHA forgot to bill health authorities and fundholders or keep records of private and overseas patients.

As the PAC put it: "This reflects adversely on the efficiency with which South Birmingham was being managed, on the honesty of the managers and on the authority's accountability." Dickens was finally requested to leave with a £33,000 pay-off to pursue a lucrative career as an NHS adviser.

● THE **department of health** has come up with a generous new night visit fee scheme for GPs: 2.8p per patient per week. Just the boost that GPs need to continue their 24-hour commitment.

M.D.

JOBS FOR THE BOYOS

THE sound of singing in the valleys is being drowned out by Welsh quango chiefs rubbing their hands together — in particular, Michael Boyce, chief executive of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation.

Boyce took early retirement as chief executive of South Glamorgan county council before winning the public-funded position at Cardiff Bay. Most assumed that his handsome council pension would be withdrawn — but it wasn't: he was allowed to keep it because it was argued that the quango had actually wanted someone with private sector experience and thus his council post was not relevant to him getting the job.

So Boyce kept his hefty pension on top of his new salary — but that meant he also had to be bought a £24,000 top-of-the-range Jaguar in which to carry all his money around with him.

The Jag of course wouldn't have been any use when Boyce crossed the pond to Baltimore in the US with assorted quango chiefs and hacks. The 33 Cardiff Taffia members were sure their charisma would bring lots of business to Wales — which it ought to: the trip cost taxpayers £100,000. No doubt the men from the Welsh Development Agency, Cardiff Bay and Wales Tourist Board believe it was money well spent.

DOWN ON THE FARM

ON JUNE last year none other than Sir Jerry Wiggin, former chairman of the Commons agriculture select committee, told the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, aka the Maffia, to avoid making "inflated claims" for its deregulation programme.

Even Wiggin, who is not exactly famous for his robust criticism of this monstrous ministry — had noted that the Maffia was including virtually all of its "policy initiatives" under the heading of "deregulation", a move he found "highly dubious".

Now the Maffia is proposing to bring out new meat hygiene regulations, another of its "policy initiatives", the purpose of the law being to empower its sleazy quango, the Meat Hygiene Services (*Eyes passim*), to take over meat inspection — at far higher cost than the local councils which do the work now.

Has the Maffia listened to Wiggin? Er, no. True to its usual dishonest self, it has perpetuated its "highly dubious" practice of claiming its work was "carried out under the prime minister's deregulation initiative".

As well as bringing in the MHS, the proposed regulations also create yet another power to close slaughterhouses — as if there weren't enough already. Among 130 pages of requirements, they aim to force closure on the basis of breaches of "hygiene" criteria which are not even written into the law. If this is "de-regulation", think what the Maffia could do if it set its heart on "regulation".

THE skills deployed by the Maffia in destroying the meat industry were of course learned and refined during its disastrous slaughter of 3.5 million egg-laying hens in a vain attempt to control salmonella. Apart from putting 5,000 egg farmers out of business, it systematically defrauded farmers of their lawful compensation for the hens it had slaughtered.

Underpinning the slaughter policy were compulsory flock testing regulations, forcing thousands of farmers to stick cotton buds up hens' bottoms before sending them to laboratories at their own expense. If any infection was found, this triggered the Maffia blood-lust.

Shortly after the policy was abandoned in February last year — when food-poisoning had soared to record levels — many egg producers vowed that never again would they test their flocks. Nevertheless some of their number were invited to form a committee to draw up a "voluntary" code of practice on the control of salmonella. Top of the agenda — set by the ministry — was... flock testing.

When after two meetings producers expressed their implacable opposition to this "voluntary" testing, the Maffia found it "inconvenient" to hold any more meetings. Instead it lay doggo until last month when it announced that "some [egg] industry organisations may have reconsidered their policy" on testing. Without consulting other producer organisations, the Maffia lost no time in "fleshing out" the "industry" code, adding, er... flock testing.

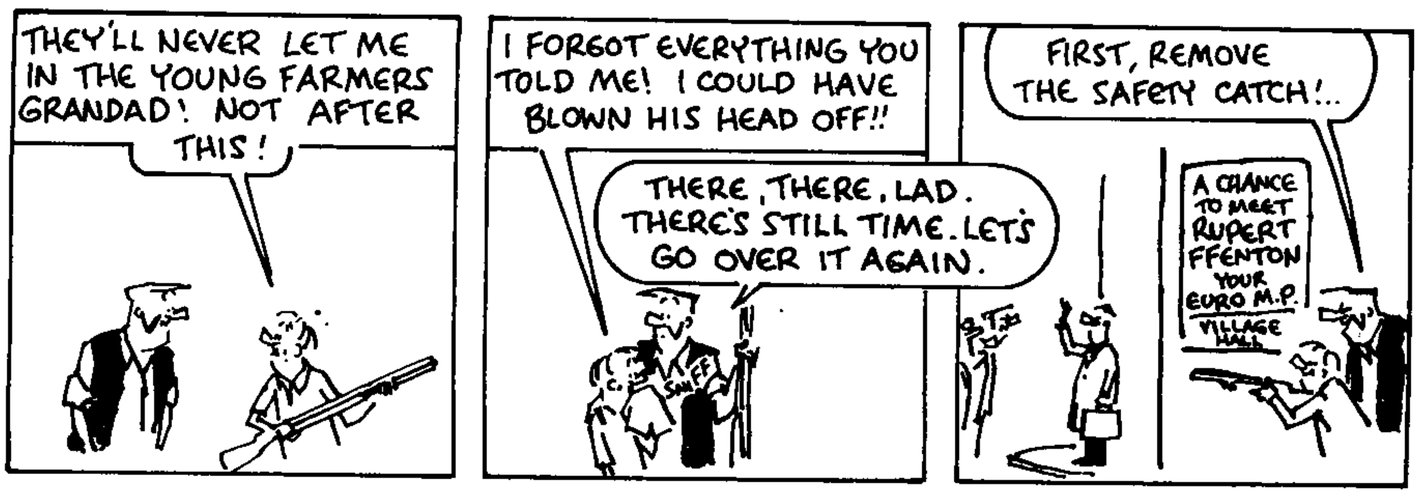
The United Kingdom Egg Producers' Association — representing the smaller producers who suffered most from the slaughter policy — told the code's author, Maffia boss Richard Cawthorne, to stick it where the sun don't shine.

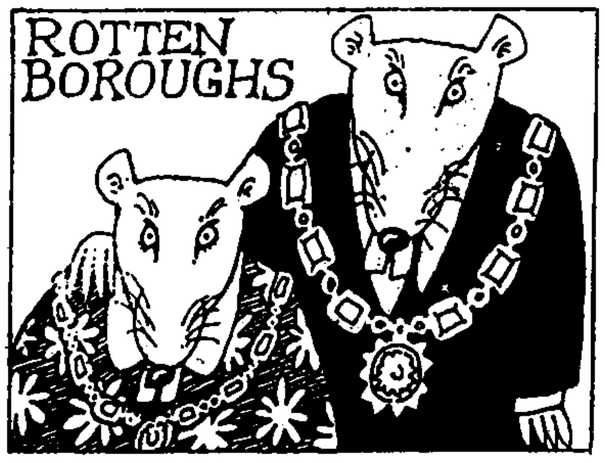
Interestingly the "organisations" which "reconsidered their policy" on testing were those under the umbrella of the British Egg Industry Council, headed by none other than Maffia pensioner Mike Ring — who had moved from administering the slaughter policy to take charge of the "big boys" egg trade association on behalf of the Maffia.

'New Muckspreader'

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


THEY'LL NEVER LET ME IN THE YOUNG FARMERS GRANDAD! NOT AFTER THIS!
I FORGOT EVERYTHING YOU TOLD ME! I COULD HAVE BLOWN HIS HEAD OFF!!
THERE, THERE, LAD. THERE'S STILL TIME. LET'S GO OVER IT AGAIN.
FIRST, REMOVE THE SAFETY CATCH!..
A CHANCE TO MEET RUPERT FFENTON YOUR EURO M.P. VILLAGE HALL



BIRMINGHAM

SOCIAL workers who run Birmingham's St John's children's home seem to have decided that organised crime is the order of the day.

A gang of thugs from the home's remand unit, Woodsong, has run amok around Erdington. What started with street robberies — the St John's inmates threatened children and young teenagers *with a screwdriver* before taking their money and sometimes their clothes — has now escalated and moved on to the buses, with attacks on children and old people. When public transport palls the tearaways find their own — several children have been mugged and had their mountain bikes stolen.

The gang all met at Woodsong while awaiting trial for various offences and are meant to be under close supervision. The reality is that the home's under-trained and under-qualified social workers are so desperate for an easy life they let them out as and when they like. St John's principal Sue Lau has responded to the crisis by going on holiday.

BIRMINGHAM Tories are bidding to wrest the sleaze crown from their premier league comrades at Westminster.

The latest mess concerns the sale of the lavish Brandwood Conservative Club in Alcester Road South for £155,000 two years ago. Brandwood party bosses spent £40,000 buying a new HQ — but what happened to the balance of the money remains a mystery to this day.

The club's board is chaired by former Tory councillor John Lena and includes his wife Sandra, fellow postal workers and close friends Bill Birch and Ian Gilmore, plus Mr Birch's wife, Pam. Sounds incestuous? Michael Dolley, Tory party agent for the whole of Birmingham, certainly thought so.

Indeed, Dolley was so horrified by what he found that he has ordered the dissolution of the whole Brandwood party. Strangely, though, he seems to have got mixed up: for Brandwood party members are the good guys who, led by councillors John Trojnacki and Graeme Coombes, have been trying to force Lena out and get access to the club accounts for the past two years.

How did Dolley get so confused? No one is sure. But it certainly had nothing to do with the huge donation recently announced by John Lena to Dolley's Euro-election fund. The donation — part of the sale proceeds — has evidently so confused Dolley that he has even decided to overlook the fact that the balance left from the sale of the club has shrunk by more than £40,000 while under the control of Lena and his sidekicks!

TOWER HAMLETS

FUN and games in Tower Hamlets, where ex-British National party councillor Derek Beackon is trying to get reelected, and in yet another scandal the council has incurred the wrath of its own auditors, the district auditor *and* Inspector Knacker.

The last three are looking at allegations of chronic overspending following the council's move to new offices in Canary Wharf in summer 1993. The council is now based in a luxury Docklands towerblock with glass lifts and fountains. It is so exclusive it's not even on the map, and staff and visitors need two lots of security clearance to get anywhere near the building.

The move, engineered by the now ousted Liberals, was meant to give Tower Hamlets a hi-tech business identity and shake off the old image of loony ideologues and dodgy local businessmen. But are East Enders getting good value for money?

The new HQ cost the impoverished authority £10 million for a 10-year lease, while the old town hall in Poplar, supposedly worth £1 million, was recently sold for £250,000. The auditors are also examining receipts for new furniture. Councillors estimated it would cost £200,000 to deck out the building but spent £1.8 million. Two officers have been suspended and more heads are set to roll.

ROCHESTER

MPs at Westminster have no monopoly on mixing political and business interests — witness the example of Robert Gibbs, a Tory councillor on Rochester city council.

Gibbs recently wrote a letter to his electorate, fairly oozing with sincerity: "You will know from my efforts around the village over past years that I have local people's interests at heart," he gushed.

Then, with the public reminded of his local standing and utter trustworthiness, he hit them with the real purpose of the missive: "I have recently become a Company Representative for Crown Financial Management and am now able to offer you advice on a wide range of investments, such as Life Assurance, Endowments, Pensions, Mortgages etc."

Happily the council's Tory group leader condemned Gibbs's blatant use of his position. But Gibbs took a leaf from the Jonathan Aitken-Neil Hamilton's book, saying he had broken no rules.

WESTMINSTER

WESTMINSTER councillors face yet more scandal when a secret internal report is completed into why the council moved single-parent families into two asbestos ridden blocks in Queens Park, west London.

Westminster inherited the two towers, Chantry Point and Hermes on Harrow Road, from the GLC in 1983. On handing over the blocks, the GLC's medical officer expressed "serious concern" over the release of asbestos fibres and said that due to the deteriorating condition of the buildings only the removal of the asbestos would prevent people being poisoned.

A few years later a Westminster council officer even wrote a masters thesis on the blocks which claimed that they "may provide the greatest potential for asbestos release of any residential accommodation in Britain".

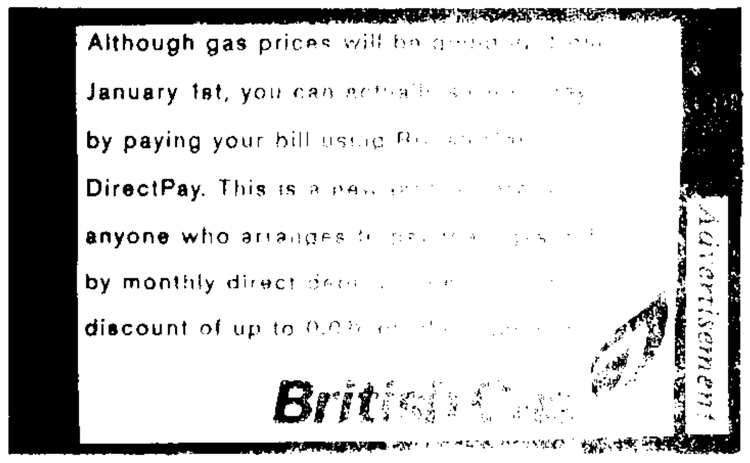
However, this didn't stop Westminster moving in low-paid young people on short-term leases — known in town hall circles as "shortlifers". In 1987, while supposedly Labour-voting families were being moved out of marginal wards, the council actually decided against decanting families into Harrow Road's asbestos corner. But two years later, having run out of alternatives, it went ahead and 60 homeless families were moved from marginal Bayswater into the safe Labour Harrow Road ward.

Had the blocks been cleaned up in the meantime? Not exactly. Only a few months previously council workmen had smashed up the flats to stop squatters moving in — thereby exposing even more asbestos.

WESTMINSTER

AS the Westminster "homes for votes" inquiry continues, the future of Barry Legg, now Conservative MP for Milton Keynes South West, looks increasingly bleak.

In a written submission to the "Portergate"



inquiry, he confirmed that [illegible] meetings with Dame Shirley at which [illegible] and unlawful" gerrymandering [illegible]. However, his defence is that [illegible] never paid attention to the [illegible] was "extraordinarily busy" [illegible] to bring up.

Legg went on to state [illegible] part-time councillor [illegible] seven years was the council' [illegible] former colleague Patricia [illegible] chair, said she had no [illegible] bad memory".

MORE problems for the [illegible] defending Lady Porter and [illegible] the Westminster "homes for votes" inquiry.

Jeremy McMullen, the [illegible] for the General Municipal and [illegible] who is defending Graham [illegible] director of housing in Westminster, has complained to the Society for Labour Lawyers [illegible] circulation of an appeal [illegible] Westminster objectors who [illegible] raise money to put the case [illegible] gerrymandering.

McMullen pretends he is [illegible] brief" — believed to be a reference [illegible] Managerial and Professional [illegible] paying the enormous fees of Mr [illegible] colleague, former Communist Bill Hughes, who represents the former deputy housing director at Westminster, Paul Hayler.

Dwindling staff at the [illegible] that their funds should be used [illegible] even threatened to pass a [illegible] their general secretary until the [illegible] move might jeopardise their [illegible].

McMullen has also [illegible] the Law Society about the [illegible] Andrew Dismore, Labour group [illegible] Westminster. As McMullen [illegible] the first day, Dismore, who joined [illegible] outside, shouted out the single [illegible].

What can he have meant?

SOUTHWARK

TENANTS on Southwark [illegible] Gardens estate in Bermondsey [illegible] complained about poor security and rising crime. And much good it has done them.

After a lot of agitating, tenants [illegible] met in the council's local [illegible] with high-powered housing [illegible]. And as they discussed ways [illegible] more than £20,000 of computer [illegible] stolen from the building while the [illegible] full swing.

Oi. mate we can't offer you thousands if you let in a goal
But we'll promise you one thing
You won't have to leave in an ambulance with broken ribs and a smashed face

COMPUTING NEWS

AS HEAD of the department of social security's computing group ITSA, Ian Magee's reward for presiding over the DSS's latest computing cock-up is promotion to the much larger Contributions Agency.

ITSA's notorious Assist project, which was intended to coordinate the DSS's many piecemeal statistical systems, was finally abandoned a fortnight ago when contractors from ICL and Hoskyns were ordered to clear their desks. The cost of the cock-up is officially estimated at £35 million.

Magee was brought in by social security secretary Peter Lilley to forge exciting new partnerships with private sector computer experts, and his sweetener was an annual "efficiency bonus" of £5,000. Amazingly he has been assured that this year's bonus is not in doubt — even after the Assist fiasco.

PS: Magee's ITSA predecessor, James Kenworthy, who was responsible for appointing ICL to the Assist project, has since left for a more lucrative private sector opportunity... with ICL International.

AN IMPORTANT thread running through the social justice commission's report for the Labour party is the generous support of accountancy firm Arthur Andersen and its sister consultancy, Andersen Consulting.

The report pays tribute to the funds "generously provided by the Andersen Foundation", a charity which dishes out money from the Andersen empire (and can thus set its generosity against tax). The report also notes the evidence and assistance of two senior Andersen partners, Keith Burgess and David Clinton, and two other Andersen experts, Dhaminder Kang and Michael Yates.

One radical recommendation which was expected from the commission was the merging on to one computer system of information about tax and benefits. The commission, however, sternly rejects this proposal. The rejection has nothing whatever to do with the fact that Andersen Consulting is responsible for the very expensive computing system for benefits at the department of social security, while another firm, EDS, is firmly entrenched at the Inland Revenue.

WATER NEWS

THE story of Oxwich bay on the Gower peninsula in south Wales raises worrying questions about the European Union's monitoring of Britain's beaches.

Oxwich's credentials for being one of the cleanest beaches in Britain took a severe knock recently when it emerged that several people had contracted debilitating illnesses after bathing there. Teenagers Cassandra Lewis and John Osborne were paralysed by viral infections after swimming in the supposedly clean waters this summer.

Welsh Water, the National Rivers Authority and Swansea city council claimed that the bay was regularly checked for water quality and had always passed the tests — hence its billing as an EU clean beach.

Despite the EU's claims that Oxwich was a clean beach, it now appears the authorities have been economical with the truth. The EU tests on water quality do not include checking for viral infections — which is exactly what Oxwich is accused of harbouring.

"We're talking British Telecom numbers"

Letters

Hall of infamy

Sir,

I was very amused to read in EYE *859 your article on page 24 called Lady Cobhamley's Lover.*

Being very boring and pathetic I am writing as the owner of Ragley Hall, which is in Warwickshire, to point out that the playlet should have been set in Hagley Hall in Worcestershire.

For some years now I have taken out a subscription with PRIVATE EYE, *which I greatly enjoy and look forward to receiving* PRIVATE EYE *for many years to come. I also must admit to being a great fan of* HAVE I GOT NEWS FOR YOU.

Yours sincerely,
THE EARL OF YARMOUTH,
Ragley Hall, Alcester.

Lookalike

Cecil Parkinson

Anne Heseltine

Sir,

In their younger days I understand that Cecil Parkinson and Michael Heseltine shared a flat.

Considering the remarkable resemblance between Mrs Heseltine and Cecil Parkinson, I wonder if any of your readers ever saw the two of them in the same place at the same time.

Sincerely,
NOEL HANNON,
London SW8

Variations on a theme park

Sir,

If memory serves, David Mellor's GUARDIAN *column of 20 September was more informative than you said (Hackwatch,* EYE *859).*

Castigating all objectors to proposals to build an extensive visitor's complex adjacent to Elgar's tiny birthplace (and categorising the great composer's descendants as rag, tag and bobtail along the way) Mellor's main argument in favour of the scheme appeared to be that, since the area of Broadheath was pretty well wrecked in any case, why not finish the job. What was Mellor in cabinet again? Oh, yes — "national heritage" secretary. Obviously made for the job!

Yours faithfully,
KEITH L. HARRISON, RIBA,
Sheffield, South Yorkshire.

House and garden

Sir,

On 18 November 1994, PRIVATE EYE *carried an article about the university [Kent] and its new vice-chancellor, Professor Robin Sibson. The article was wrong in several important respects.*

Robin Sibson was not involved in discussion about grass cutting on campus. These decisions were taken before he came to the university. In fact, no staff have been dismissed and the university decided in July 1994 to retain its own estates staff to cut the grass. Car parking charges were first introduced in 1993, long before his appointment.

Like his two predecessors as vice-chancellor, Robin Sibson is required to live in the house provided for him by the university. He is also expected to entertain there on the university's behalf and to provide his own furniture, carpets and curtains. Before he moved in, the university knew that it would need to undertake essential maintenance and to modernise the house. This was done with the agreement and knowledge of the relevant officers. The garden was not landscaped.

The en-suite bathroom in the registry is in fact a shower cubicle installed in an existing cloakroom and is not for the vice-chancellor's exclusive use. It cost a lot less than £16,000.

I am sorry to spoil your story, but in the university we are concerned with facts. That's our trade.

Yours faithfully,
DR TIMOTHY MEAD,
Registrar, University of Kent at Canterbury.

Past imperfect

Sir,

Kurd Aid, EYE *859. While completely supporting their plight for what is a very obvious separate national identity, I note that you, like all other western mainstream media, grant the would-be Kurdish nation the status of a cause célèbre. Subsequently, they've become perhaps the most in-your-face of all the world's brutalised races.*

What few journals remind us of, however, is the little matter of this century's first attempt at national genocide, and, as importantly, culpability for it. The Ottoman Empire's holocaust on the Armenian people in 1915 would later act as an inspiration for Hitler (though he is said to have recoiled at its recorded cruelty). A defenceless and pacified populus were cold-bloodedly butchered in the name of Islamic lebensraum (in excess of one million according to the Kurdish historian Kendal Nezan). And who carried out this almost untold bloodlust? The Kurd national volunteers, the Hamidieh, trying, as ever, to curry favour for their separatist cause (and eliminating non-conformists within their own tribes, it should be added).

As ever, history is wont to throw up disconcerting facts.

Yours faithfully,
KERI NANSHIROV,
Hoylake, The Wirral.

Blind man's bluff

Sir,

Reading your excellent special on the Scott inquiry makes me wonder about Hurd and Major's attitude to the Bosnian arms embargo. They are extremely narked at Clinton's decision to turn a blind eye to international attempts to help the Bosnian government defend itself, as is its right under article 51 of the UN charter.

Why the fuss? Perhaps because Bosnia has no oil, and Alija Izetbegovi is not nearly nasty enough for them, unlike Saddam Hussein, President Suharto, etc, etc, etc...

Yours etc,
TOM CARTER,
Somerton, Somerset.

I-SPY *Wrotham, Kent*

Submitted by Indecipherable. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Red french letter day

Sir,

I always thought Funny Old World stories were made up or exaggerated, until I saw the item on the passing of Joyce, the Oxford transvestite and eccentric.

Entertaining, he certainly was, but it was a bugger if he ever singled you out in a crowd.

One day I plucked up courage to buy something for the weekend — actually, in my case it was something for the next year or two, because my previous packet was already past its use-by date. There I was at the Boots counter, trying to look inconspicuous and holding out my money, when Joyce made a beeline for me.

In a high-pitched voice, making everyone turn their heads, he shouted "You're buying rubber johnnies!" (they weren't called condoms then). "Horrid things! They stop you having babies, you know. **Never** *use them!"*

Well, that was it. I abandoned my purchase and left as fast as I could, publicly identified as a johnny-buyer (failed).

Yours faithfully,
MIKE FOSTER,
Twickenham, Middlesex.

On the Trot

Sir,

I agree of course that THE GUARDIAN YEAR '94 *would have been much better, and much more boring, if it had contained lots of my letters. But I am not a liberal. I hate Liberals. I remain, of course, an "unreconstituted Trot still braying on about the socialist dawn", as all true* GUARDIAN *readers fully understand.*

Yours sincerely,
KEITH FLETT,
Principal, William Morris School of Bearded Socialists.

Late addition

Sir,

An advertiser in EYE *856 offers a periodical entitled "China's Tibet". Presumably we may look forward to other magazines in the same vein called "Indonesia's East Timor", "Morocco's Western Sahara", "Turkey's Kurdistan", and "Serbia's Bosnia"? Fortunately, "Iraq's Kuwait" and "Russia's Baltic States" appear to have ceased publication.*

Yours colonially,
ROD PARKES,
New Territories, Hong Kong.

O·B·N

As a gas consumer I am delighted to pay Cedric Brown and fellow directors their salary increases which work out at less than one quarter of a penny per week per week on the bill in return for the superb and efficient service that British Gas now delivers. We need a lot more Cedric Browns and a lot fewer whingers.

R. USOKAY
Letter to Evening Standard

Submitted by Nicky Smith.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Rude remarks

Sir,

When I tried to buy PRIVATE EYE *in W.H. Smith last week, it was not in its usual place, next to the politicals such as* THE ECONOMIST *and* THE NEW STATESMAN. *A shop assistant told me it had been moved to the top shelf "because children might see it". I am afraid that now would-be purchasers have to fumble for your formerly esteemed organ between magazines such as* PENTUP *and* SAD MEN ONLY.

Yours in sorrow,
I. MANDERS,
New Malden, Surrey.

PS: Are you planning to send out to your subscribers using a plain brown envelope?

Transport of delight

Sir,

Alas for Gnome, users of Manchester's trams seem blithely ignorant of his curse. With passengers annually around 13 million, appreciably more than used the railways previously, this "Mickey Mouse" outfit looks as if it will have to purchase more vehicles to satisfy demand.

Other tramway operations, actual and intending, will doubtless take note and actively seek Gnome's curse upon themselves too. Gnome, in turn, would be advised to make a hefty charge for so valuable a service, and then we should all benefit, those in Manchester, Sheffield, etc, from decent urban transport and those elsewhere forced to rely upon deregulated buses from a reduced cover price for your organ.

Yours sincerely,
A.M.K. RICKWOOD, MA, FRCS,
Consultant Paediatric Surgeon, Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

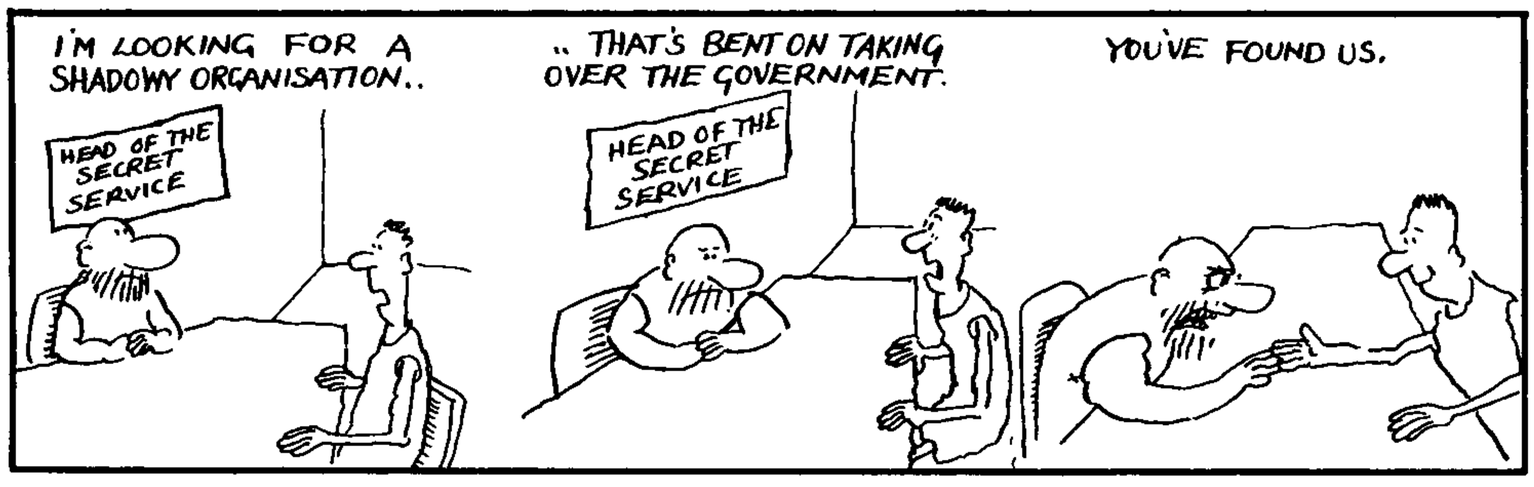
Creepy

Sir,

While you were being carried away in your new found enthusiasm for the information superhighway, did you for one moment consider the needs of those members of society inflicted with the curse of anoraknophobia?

Yours, etc, etc
DANIEL ADLER,
Farnham, Surrey.

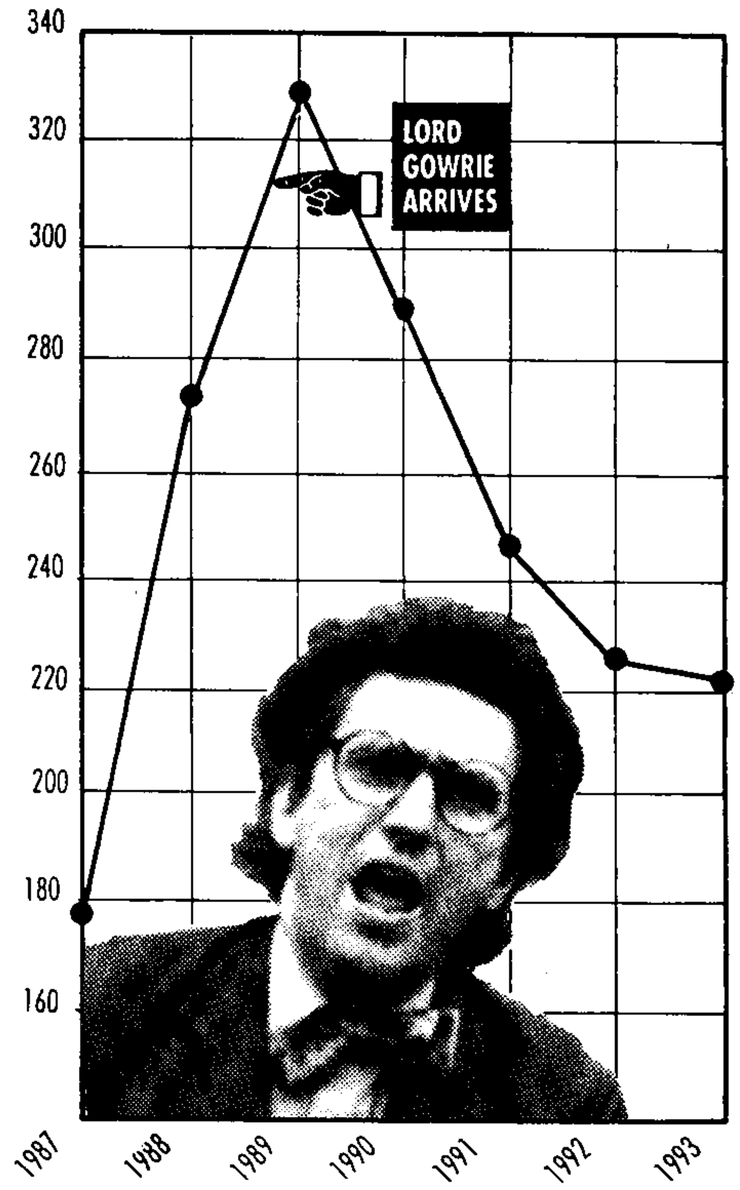
HOM SAP BY DAVID AUSTIN


I'M LOOKING FOR A SHADOWY ORGANISATION..
HEAD OF THE SECRET SERVICE
.. THAT'S BENT ON TAKING OVER THE GOVERNMENT.
HEAD OF THE SECRET SERVICE
YOU'VE FOUND US.

British Management Part 6.

EARL OF GOWRIE, former Arts Minister and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, is now Chairman of the Arts Council and has been a director of the Ladbroke Group plc since August 1988.

LADBROKE GROUP OPERATING PROFIT (£m)



Ladbroke Group plc Operating Profit
1987 – £179.3m; 1988 – £276.5m; 1989 – £329.1m; 1990 – £290.1m; 1991 – £247.2m; 1992 – £228.2m; 1993 – £226.7m.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"What disappointed me was that we didn't play with any passion. I'm not disappointed, you know, I'm just disappointed."
KEVIN KEEGAN, Radio 4
(C.M. Morris)

"... and now, from the World of the Bartered Bride to the World of Opera..."
SUSANNAH SIMONS, Classic FM
(Phil Tripp)

"... that the Government should be held to ransom by a lot of Flotsam and Bobtail..."
NORMAN LAMONT, ITV
(Michael O'Brien)

"I've lost count of how many corners there have been. Lincoln have had 1, and Crystal Palace 17."
RON JONES, Radio 5 Live
(Christian Vaughan)

James Whale: *And you write to the Yorkshire Ripper?*
Guest: *We write to each other every day.*
James Whale: *How often do you write to him?*
Guest: *Every day.*
ITV
(Bill Homewood)

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"There was a massive explosion and what looked like a bomb came crashing through my roof," George Neseveremko told reporters from his house in Thornhill, north of Toronto. "It landed right by the bed, missing us by about two feet, and it smelt very, very bad."

Neseveremko's wife, Fanzia Zaig, continued the story: "When we turned the lights on and looked at it, we saw it was a huge block of ice, with hundreds of lump of crap in it. There were sheets of used toilet paper and old tampons too. I tried to phone the police, but they couldn't understand me because I kept retching. When they turned up, they put gas masks on, so we couldn't understand what they were saying, and they just left. A government official arrived and told us it must have fallen out of an airplane's onboard toilet and it was our responsibility to move it, but it's far too heavy for us to lift, so it's been slowly melting in our bedroom for the past two days. The stench is making us sick."

Bruce Reid, spokesperson for Pearson International Airport, played down the entire incident. "The tanks can only hold so much, then they have to be emptied," he said, "and at high altitudes the liquid sometimes freezes solid. There's no need to panic though. We only have an incident like this every month or so." *(London Free Press [Ontario], 13/10/94. Spotter — Peter Hyland)*

— o —

"Toughness contests are a traditional part of Polish recreational life," Regional Prosecutor Stefan Wojcelski told a court in Stargard Szczeciski, "and the state has no wish to interfere with a playful tradition. But, while we accept amputation as an inevitable part of this, we do not accept the murder, and I therefore ask for the heaviest penalties to be brought against the three accused."

Wojcelski, who was leading the prosecution of three men accused of manslaughter, explained what had happened. "The three men had been

drinking solidly all Sunday in the garden of Krzysztof Azninski, the dead man. They put on traditional toughness bonnets and began a contest. At first they played breath holding contests. Then they hit each other with blocks of wood and banged nails into their own flesh. But then Franciszek Zyzcoszusko put his hand on a chopping block, and dared Krzysztof A to cut it off. Krzysztof A hacked at it with a knife, partially severing the wrist, then put his own head on the block and challenged Franciszek Z to chop it off. Franciszek Z beheaded him with an axe, then the three men decided things had gone too far, stopped the contest, and began singing a folksong called 'Roll the head of the giant', which woke the neighbours. That's when they were observed burying the body in the garden."

The three accused pleaded not guilty, on grounds of drunkenness. *(PAP [Polish News Agency], 25/10/94. Spotter — P Masters)*

Compiled by
VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

— o —

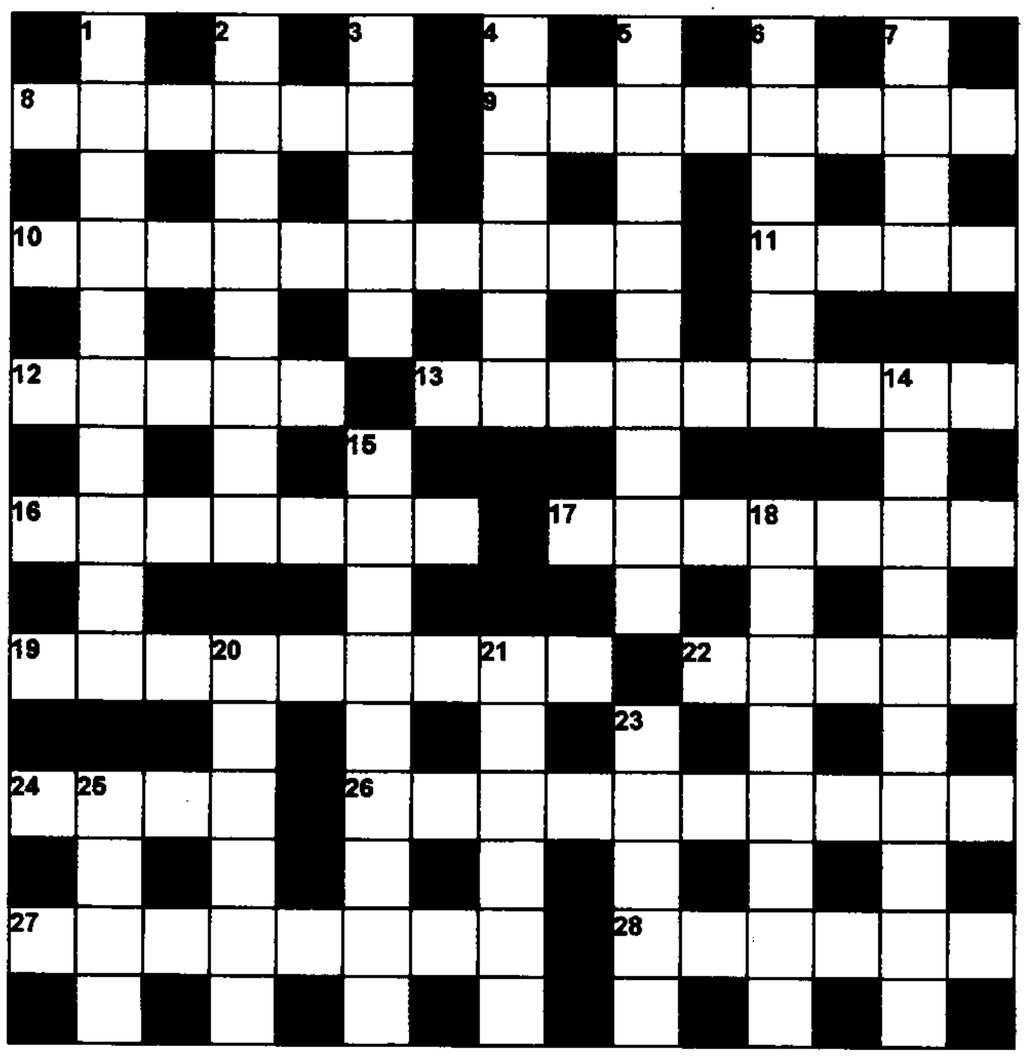
"240 miles on less than $1.35 on gas must be some kind of record," declared Alvin Straight to reporters in Blue River, Wisconsin. "Okay, the journey was slower than I'd expected, but it was surprisingly comfortable. I'd recommend travelling by lawn mower to anyone."

Straight, 78, was speaking after arriving at his brother's house, six weeks after leaving his own home in Iowa, less than 240 miles away. "I'd heard Jack was ill, and I wanted to see him one last time. I can't see well enough to get a driver's licence, but I've had a riding lawn mower for years, and you don't need a licence for that. I set off on July 5th, but it broke down after 21 miles and I spent all my money getting it fixed. I carried on, covering about 8 miles a day, but 90 miles from Blue River I completely ran out of gas and money, so I camped in a field until my Social Security check came through.

"By August 15th, I was only two miles from Jack, when the mower broke down again. So I sat by the roadside for six days, until a farmer offered to push me, and here I am. Only trouble is, the mower's completely dead now. And so's Jack. He died a month ago." (The Austin [Texas] American Statesman, 24/8/95. Spotter — Dr Norman White)

EYE CROSSWORD 16 by Cyclops

£100 Winner D. LISLE



ACROSS

8 Prescott tax holds record! (6)
9 (see 12)
10 One on the lookout for dirt, note, seen around scruffy urinals (10)
11 Blast recess, as they say in Lancashire! (4)
12/9 Rich? Not America as presented by our double-barrelled compiler (5,3,5)
13 Feel a twinge, getting a pile of money from a hi-tech killer... (5,4)
16 ... and is this the appropriate cost of one? (4,3)
17 Capital's hospital taking on old man! But there's an inital catch (7)
19 One half of Jeffrey (awful shit) is no supporter of the government (9)
22 It's definitely pigs' excrement (5)
24 Sports car's back with shortened gear-changer — lousy transmission, though (4)
26 He's involved with Persil ad — not what we've come to expect from our grey PM! (10)
27 Our old over-sexed Aussie would slip one into this former poll-watcher (8)
28 Pisspoor attempt to outflank anti-smokers (6)

DOWN

1 Maybe Ian Paisley has the answer — get rid of South in uprising! (10)
2 Debased NUM role gets 'Yes' from former premier (8)
3 Western with many twists grabs 'em while they're young (5)
4 Support for one who spouts "Prince despised state" (6)
5 Could be (if one replaced yob element) ideal Tory leader (9)
6 Maxwell (heaven finally acquired) to join House and mix with betters (6)
7 Severe criticism upset 1000 beastly lovers (4)
14 This symbol of European union makes Mrs T itch to strangle abstainers (10)
15 Chief pain in the arse for Mandela? (9)
18 Tory stalwart is a shower and phoney (8)
20 Eye again gets criticism (6)
21 Virginia's tizzies? (6)
23 Vacillating philanthropist occupying front half of celebrated US address (5)
25 House staff dropped by Ron (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 9.12.94. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 15

ACROSS: 7/20 Cash For Questions 9 Horton 10 Backhander 11 Pitt 12 Clare 13 Bay Of Pigs 15 Estonia 17 Eyeball 20 (See 7) 22 Hilda 25 Stir 26 Sellafield 27 Red Ken 28 Sponger.

DOWN: 1 Scrawl 2 Ofwat 3 Trudeau 4 Chernobyl 5 Crop up 6 Portugal 8 Sukarno 14 Kim Il Sung 16 Squatter 18 Beijing 19 Analyst 21 Stroke 23 Delors 24 Major.

New girl gang terrorises Britain

by Our Gang Staff **Liz Gurley**

AN ALL-WOMEN gang that goes out in the middle of the night has caused no one to stay in at home and is responsible for driving millions of people out into the streets in desperation, it was claimed yesterday.

This gang, headed by a tall Australian woman known simply as Dr Germaine Greer, consists of some of the toughest, meanest Guardian columnists the world has ever known.

Suzanne Moore Means Worse

The most vicious of the gang is a punk-type East-Ender called Janet who has pink hair and interesting views on youth programming.

One woman who had been attacked in her own living room for "going to bed with a man" told reporters:

"It was terrifying. My husband fainted and the cat was sick. It was almost a relief when Ann Leslie came on and did her Daily Mail Voice of Reason act."

Marcelle D'Argy Bargy is 77.

Constitutional nostrums – how that resignation could work

by ALAN WATNEYS
of the Indescribablyboring on Sunday

SHOULD Conservative backbenchers muster the requisite 34 signatures for a leadership challenge, Mr John Major would be obliged to contest the first ballot, in which he would need a decisive 57% of the vote or 317 votes; however, if his opponent should garner more than 162 votes or 33%, then Mr Major would need a further 11% of his original 58% in order to avoid having to resign. In the event of a deadlock, the Queen would be constitutionally obliged to call for a dissolution with a caveat that Mr Major, no longer being technically Prime Minister, could not resign anyway and therefore there could be no general election.

In many ways, this strengthens Major's hand but ignores the possibility that the Queen might abdicate whilst Major was on his way to the palace. This very situation was anticipated in the famous letter by Sir Dimble Trouserpress, then Private Secretary to George V, in which Sir Dimble made it clear that Mr Baldwin could not simultaneously lead a government *and* resign, thus precipitating the celebrated "Trouserpress crisis" of January 1932 which resulted in the Government resigning and taking office again within the space of an hour.

Were this situation to repeat itself, I can confidently predict that I can carry on with this article for many, many years to come.

© *Alan Watneys*

UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE

(Silly music and titles)

Paxman *(for it is he):* This week the teams are Balliol College Oxford and the University of Neasden, formerly the World of Carpets in Brent. And the starter for you, Balliol, is: recite in full the 13th century Papal Bull denouncing the Albigensian Heresy.

(Buzzer sounds. Man with glasses and unconvincing beard begins to recite in Latin)

Man with beard: Pontifex ego maximus, Innocentus Deo…

Paxman *(sneering):* Oh come on! That's the vocative tense there. Completely wrong. I can't allow that. I'm not going to offer it to Neasden because there's no point. So, Neasden, here's your first question — and, to make it easier, it's multiple choice.

(Shot of four mature students, reading VIZ [shurely 'sociology'? Ed])

Paxman: Is the Prime Minister: a) John Major? b) Bono from U2? c) Vivienne Westwood?

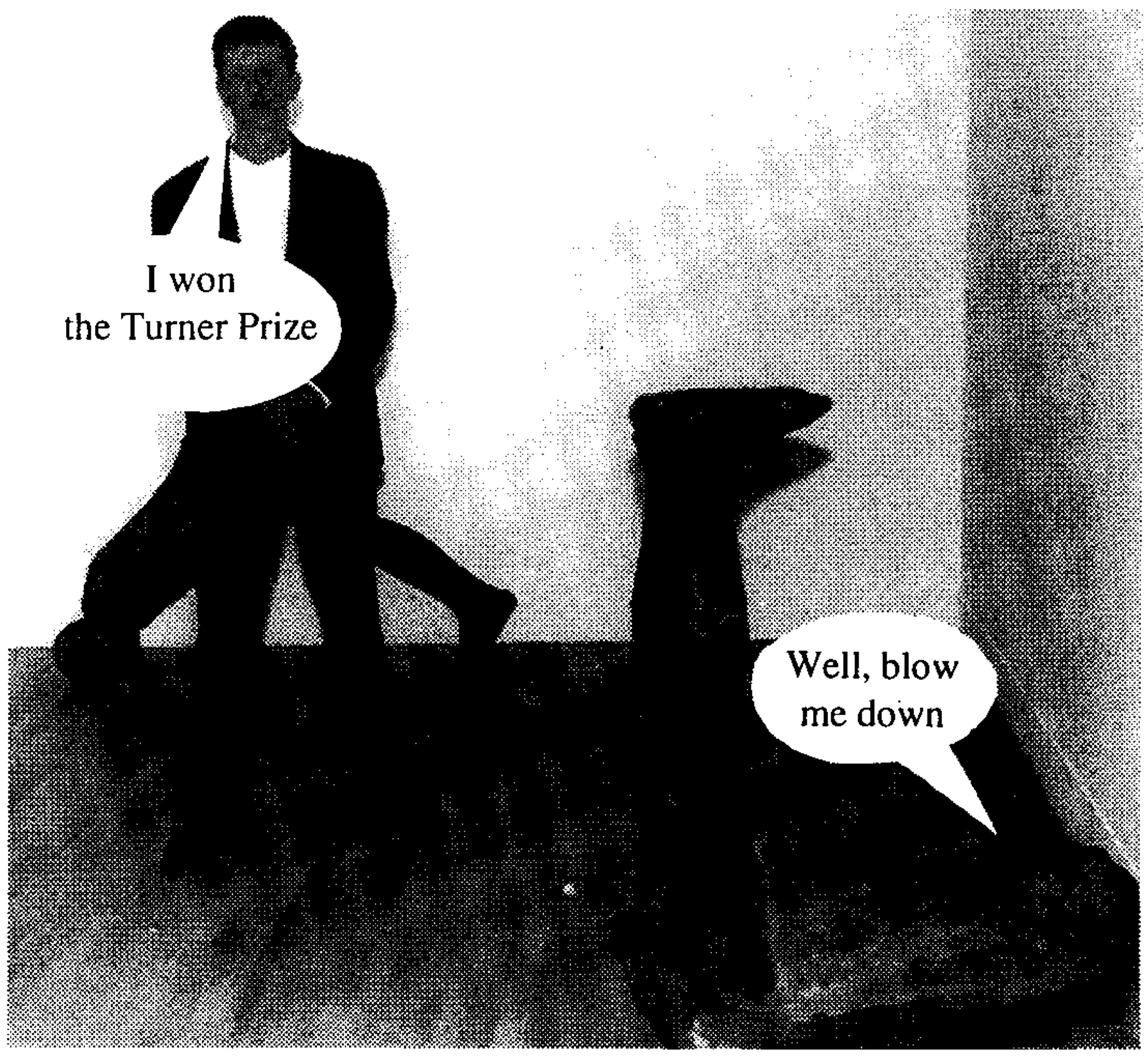
(Buzzer goes)

Voice over: Grunge, Neasden.

Grunge *(for it is he):* Is it Paul McCartney?

Paxman: Well, close enough. It begins with an 'M'. 100 points to Neasden.

(Continues in similar vein for 30 minutes)



The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94: Service of Holy Matrimony for the Third or More Time to be used by Clerks in Holy Orders.

President: Nice to see you all again.

All: To see you, nice.

President: Who giveth this vicar to be married for the *n*th time?

(Here he may say 3, 4, 5, or 94, as the case may be)

Ex-wife: I do. She's welcome to him.

(The congregation may then laugh)

Vicar: Can't we shorten this? I've got to conduct a wedding myself at 3.30 p.m.

President: Very well. Let's face it, this is the twentieth century after all.

Congregation: Indeed it is.

President: Is there any just cause or impediment why these two serial monogamists should not be joined in Holy Intercourse?

Bishop *(standing at back of church):* I object!

President: Objection overruled. You are out of touch with modern Christian beliefs. Our Lord Himself was married many times.

Bishop: No he wasn't.

President: Yes he was.

All *(sing):* Ooh-Aah-Cantona!

President: I now pronounce you Vicar and 3rd Wife.

All: Great! Terrific! *(or they may say "Nice one, Vicar" or "Come on down")*

President: You may now divorce the bride.

(The congregation shall then sung the Departing Hymn No. 94, 'I'm Getting Re-Married in the Morning' from the HymnalongaHolloway Song Book)

© *Church of England 1994.*

LOTTERY DRAMA

Gas worker wins 6-figure payout

by Our Utility Staff
Bamber Gascoiningitin

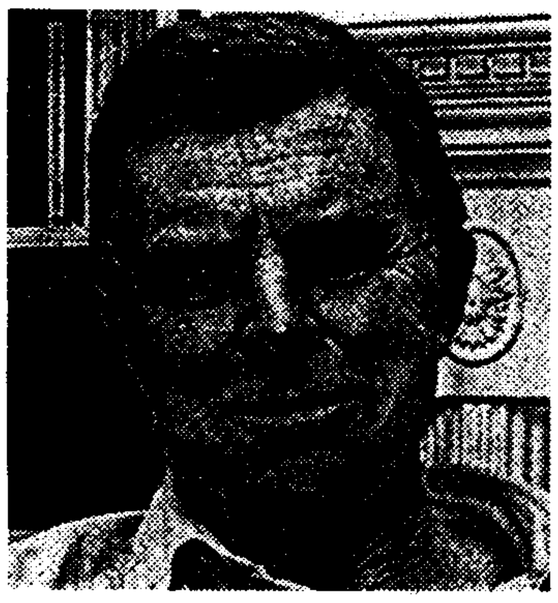
"IT WILL CHANGE MY LIFE!" chortled Yorkshire-born Gas Board official Cedric Brown, 59, who yesterday claimed a record £475,000 payout from himself in the latest Government lottery.

Speaking from his humble 15-bedroom mansion in Buckinghamshire, a clearly delighted Cedric explained to reporters how he arrived at his winning number.

What A Lottery I Got

"I was sitting around talking with a few mates at work when the idea suddenly hit me — why don't I get a huge sum of money?

"The next thing I knew, they'd all



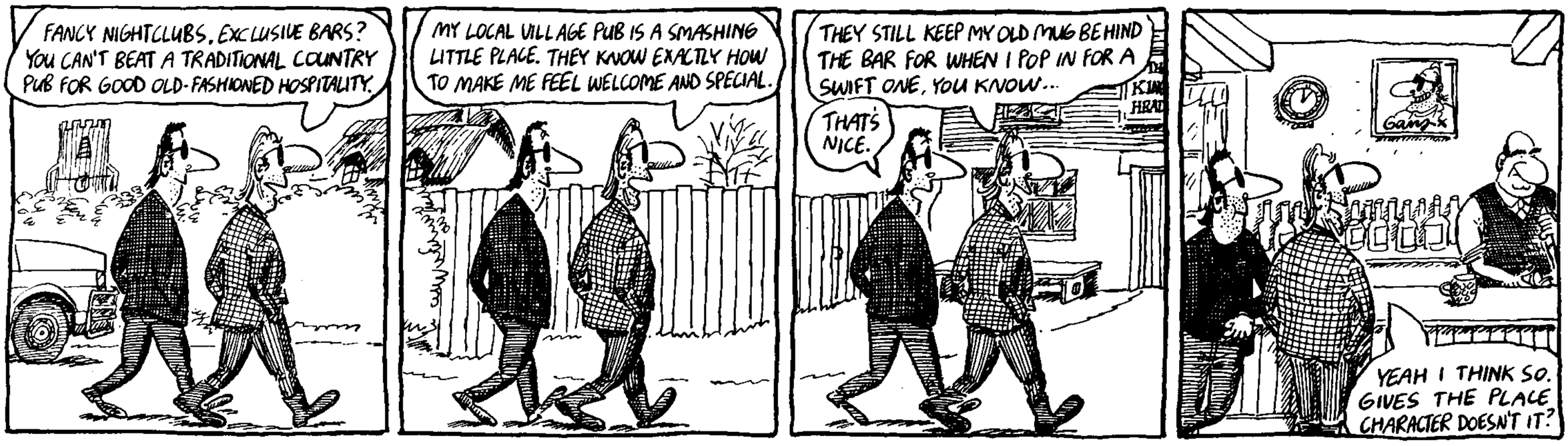
agreed and told me to name my figure.

"I chose £475,000 because it just so happened to be the amount of money I wanted to have."

Mr Brown asked for "no publicity", but unfortunately all the papers found out.

Great Bores Of Today.

"... I got two numbers last week but someone I know got three and if he'd had one more he'd have won ten quid brilliant I chose my nan's birthday my wife's age not that we're together anymore 49 because that's the bus I go to work on 21 which is the last two numbers of my sort code and 49 again because I use the same bus coming home and a single number for the bonus which is 3 after our house actually we're in a flat but if we won the lottery we would move what is it? 15 million to one? which if you think about it means that one out of two people in this country must win eventually anyway it's only a bit of fun and it helps a lot of good causes you know cancer and kiddies in need and everything you see people on the television vicars and stuff saying it's immoral but it's totally harmless and you're doing some actual good for a change we ought to get together and form a syndicate like those people in Ireland they win all the time apparently there's this lucky post office in Bodmin it's only a bit of fun who are you pushing you prat...?"


FANCY NIGHTCLUBS, EXCLUSIVE BARS? YOU CAN'T BEAT A TRADITIONAL COUNTRY PUB FOR GOOD OLD-FASHIONED HOSPITALITY.
MY LOCAL VILLAGE PUB IS A SMASHING LITTLE PLACE. THEY KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO MAKE ME FEEL WELCOME AND SPECIAL.
THEY STILL KEEP MY OLD MUG BEHIND THE BAR FOR WHEN I POP IN FOR A SWIFT ONE, YOU KNOW...
THAT'S NICE.
YEAH I THINK SO. GIVES THE PLACE CHARACTER DOESN'T IT?

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Monday

Today we all went to the House of Commons to listen to the Queen's Speech. I'm afraid, in my judgement, it was not quite as good as in previous years. She seems to have no ideas about what we should do. I put this down to her very understandable worries about her family, and especially Prince Charles who a lot of people are saying is not fit to govern. When I said this to my wife Norman, while we were watching Cracker, she said: "Perhaps you should give Charles a few tips then." I said that I was a very busy man, but that I would think about it. One thing I noticed was the Queen left out any mention of selling off the railways, which is Mr Clarke's brilliant way of raising £20 billion, so that we can have some tax cuts in time for the next election. But fortunately when I mentioned this to Mr Clarke he said, "Oh, that's alright, Prime Minister, that's covered by the bit at the end where she said 'My Government will press ahead with its plans to do whatever it likes, whenever it feels like it, without necessarily having to tell the public.' "

Tuesday

At last all our problems are over! Oh, yes. We have discovered who has been responsible for everything that has gone wrong for my government in the past four years. It is all the fault of my now ex-friend Miss Hogg, who thought up every single one of my worst ideas, including:

- The Cones Hotline.
- Back to Basics.
- Joining the ERM.
- Not leaving the ERM when we should have.
- Trying to rejoin the ERM.
- Privatising the Post Office.
- Not privatising the Post Office.
- Telling me to appoint Mr Hanley as Chairman after I met him in the tea room and he gave me a signed photo of his mother in Genevieve, which was *not* my favourite film, as my brother Terry quite wrongly alleges on page 91 of his book. Not that I have read it, because I am a busy man. But it is worth pointing out that my favourite film was, as everyone knows, Lassie Come Home, although I did not cry, as Terry claims. When I told Norman that I had asked Miss Hogg to be sacked, she said, "A clear case of Lassie Go Home." I don't know what she was talking about.

Wednesday

All the papers are agreed that I was quite right to sack Miss Hogg. "Major Looks For Scapegoat" said the Daily Mail. The Times was equally supportive with its headline: "Too Little Too Late As Timid Major Fires Top Aide". The Sun put it with its usual jokiness: "Dopey John Dumps Cone Woman As Tories Go Down Toilet".

Thursday

I have had a very odd letter from a Mr Maples, who works for Mr Hanley, helping him with the crossword. It was marked "For PM Only — How To Win The Next Election". In it Mr Maple said that he had done a survey of all our supporters in the country — well over 1,000 people — and they had said the following things:

- John Major is useless.
- So are the rest of the Cabinet.
- We don't believe in the recovery.
- We are fed up with sleaze, corruption, lies, Europe, privatisation and everything else the government stands for.
- And lastly we are particularly angry that the government never listens to anything we say.

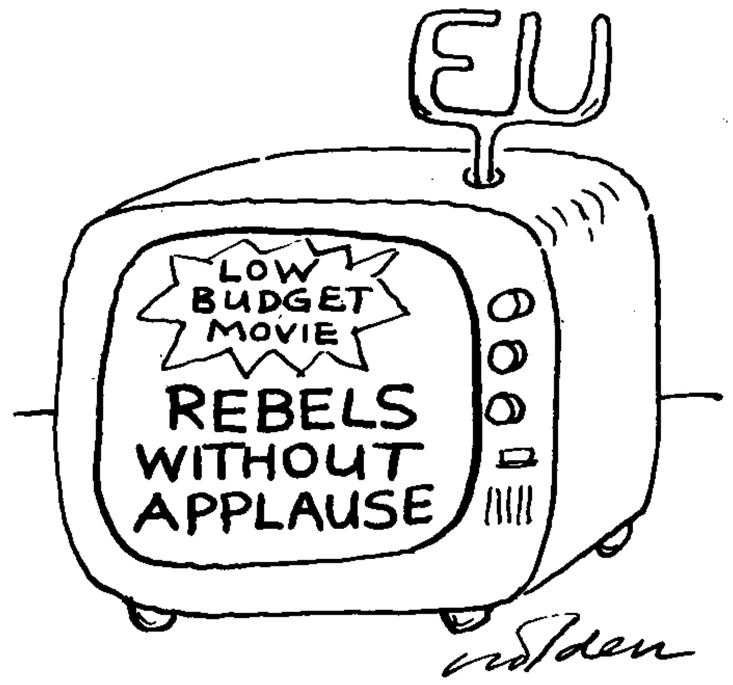
I have decided to ignore all this, as it is obviously rubbish.

Unfortunately, when I gave the letter back to Mr Hanley and told him to "chuck it out", he thought I meant send it to all the newspapers. When I read it in the Daily Telegraph I noticed that there was even a PS. which I had not bothered to read. This said, "PS. I think our only

hope of winning the next election is to get some Tory yobboes to beat up Mr Blair." It is very annoying of Mr Maples to say this. It implies that I am not perfectly well able to beat up Mr Blair myself, as I do twice every week at Question Time. I have only to open my ring-binder for Mr Blair to put on that silly smile and look terrified. For example, only yesterday Mr Blair asked me why I did not resign. I immediately fired back "Because I am the Prime Minister". That shut him up. All he was able to reply was "Not for long, you're not" and all the House laughed at his discomfiture.

Friday

Although I have got rid of Miss Hogg, my problems are not completely over. Apparently, my government is going to be defeated by some Conservative MPs over the European budget. But I have a not inconsiderably clever plan which will totally outwit them. I have told all our MPs that if they don't back me, I shall order the Queen to call an election. And then they will all lose their seats except



me, because I have the biggest majority in the country. So I will be the only Conservative MP in Parliament and therefore Leader of the Opposition like Mr Blair. And then I will be popular again. Oh yes.

Monday

Mr Clarke has brought in his budget, which is almost as clever as my Budgets used to be when I was Chancellor.

Mr Clarke is going to raise taxes so that he can lower them again before the next election. "The more I put them up, the more I can bring them down," he explained.

"It may make you unpopular in the short term, but it will make whoever is Prime Minister next year very popular indeed," he said cheerfully. "Particularly if he is a former Chancellor."

This I took as a not inconsiderable compliment to myself.

Unfortunately, he left his red box behind and also a number of suitcases and trunks labelled "K. Clarke, No. 10 Downing Street. To await arrival."

Tuesday

My very ex-friend Norma Lamont wants to be Prime Minister, I read in the Daily Telegraph.

How ungrateful can you get?

Anyway, Norma does not seem to have noticed that there is already a Prime Minister in office, ie me. "Don't worry. No one will vote for him," my wife Norma assured me. "He was the one that ran your leadership campaign."

Women are never very logical in their attitude to politics (see Mrs Thatcher), but I think she may have a point this time.

Wednesday

Good news at last! Though not very good news for my in-no-small-measure ex-friend Norma Lamont. The newspapers now agree that he has no chance of being Prime Minister! No indeed! It is going to be Mr Heseltine, or Mr Portillo, or Mr Clarke or Mr Howard or, as they put it, "*any* member of the current cabinet except one". (Probably Mr Waldegrave.)

That certainly will take the fizz out of Mr Lamont's cheap champagne from Threshers*. Oh yes.

*The Proprietor's name at Threshers is a Mr Onanoogoo, and not, as my brother Terry keeps telling reporters at first nights and film premières, Mr Hargreaves. Terry has mixed him up with the man who used to own the chemist's on the corner of Parkdown Road all those years ago.

CHESTER SQUARE SW1

Dear Bill,

Did you see that M. has been in trouble over arms again? Not, this time, I am glad to say, the Boy Mark, still recovering in hospital from his mother's visit in a marriage guidance capacity, but a slimy little fellow from the College of Heralds who arrived at Chester Square with a real dog's breakfast of a design showing some bearded Bertie in woolly jumper shoring up Margaret's crest in company with a blindfolded woman in a nightdress selling something out of a pair of scales. I can't remember what the motto was, but it was something to do with keeping your end up and being one of us.

What was particularly annoying was that I had just that same evening with the help of my little friend Baggers, an artistic johnny who sometimes earns a bob or two helping behind the bar at the RAC, roughed out what seemed to me an infinitely superior version.

The shield part, Baggers and I decided, should have one of those sharp points that you poke people in the eye with, and then in the little square bits a Dead Argie couchant hoist on a torpedo gules – this is the lingo these fellows use, as I discovered when they did mine – then on the other side Margaret mounted on a dragon slaying Arthur Scargill. The bottom half was then divided into two, with a Sheikh rampant handing over a sack of readies on one side, and on the other the BT prancing fairies escaping from the serpent coils of Nationalisation.

Supporting the crest, where this woolly-jersied buffoon now stands, was myself, G&T in hand and smiling serenely in my Inverness cape, golf bag over one shoulder. On the other our generous patron Rupert M. making generous advances to my little woman in the form of a very large cheque. Above were crossed handbags, and below the motto

"We Are A Grandmother", which would obviously have to be put into Latin. I was going to ask Waldegrave, but he warned me that translating work of that kind came very expensive, so I left it until I next run into Enoch P.

Unfortunately, when I showed this to Garter Pursuivant Extraordinary (E.F. Ratner-Leng – you probably remember him from Huntercombe) he was very snooty and said these things had to be done by trained heralds. The identical design also happened to belong to Lord Montagu who would certainly sue for breach of copyright if we pinched his motto.

Baggers, I can tell you, was pretty miffed when I broke the news to him, as he had put a lot of work into it, and had had to spend a whole afternoon in the Library to get the Argie uniform right. I enclose his drawing. Maybe your local Conservative Association could use it for their Christmas Card. I know they're none too keen on the present incumbent.

I wish I could tell you better news of the old girl's mental health, but alas I cannot. Last week I caught her on the roof at Chester Square tossing tiles into the street and saying she wasn't coming down till we got out of Europe.

Yours in injury time,

Denis

SUPERMODELS

Neil Kerber

I CAN'T BELIEVE THE BRITISH PRESS..... THEY JUST WRITE WHATEVER THEY WANT!
RICHARD AND CINDY TO SPLIT UP
I KNOW DARLING..... LOOK - "RICHARD GERE IS TO LEAVE CINDY CRAWFORD FOR HIS BRAND NEW LOVE"..... WHAT RUBBISH!
RICHARD
WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER FOR AGES, HAVEN'T WE LAURA!
YEP!
Kerber

Coming soon in the

THE SPECTATOR

More William Cash Exclusives

Do the Jews run Israel?

Is the Pope a Catholic?

Do bears shit in the woods?

(Shurely another mishtake, Ed.)

© The SpectacularlySilly

GCSE English Literature

3 Hours (or as long as you like)

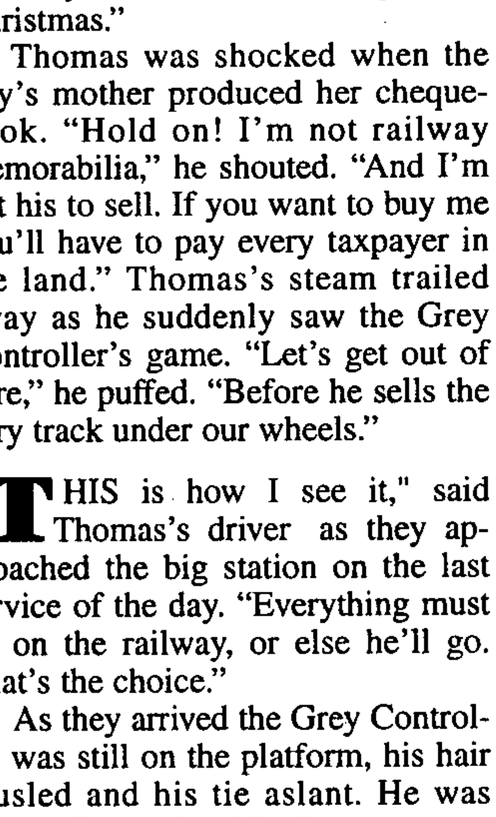
Paper One

Read the following extract from the Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer and say what you think about it.

The Camilla's Tale

A ladye was there hyght Camilla Parker-Bowles
Who of the maydenhead of Engelond was the fairest of all soules.
Married was she to a soldier brave and true
A Colonel of the Guardes was he, yclept Andrew.
Upon the comely dame a Prince did cast his eye
And saith to her, "With thee, fair wench, I wish to lie."
And so the twain were soon enclasp'd in bed
Though each of these wightes was to another wed.
Her snow-white breastes made princely passions rise
Till e'en the butler heard his lecherous cries.
"My Prince," quoth she, "to thee I plight my troth;
So long as our love stays secret twixt us both."
Imagine then her great dismay to see
Her lustful lover appearing on TV,
Sitting in his garden without his jacket
Boasting how he had placed a hand upon her placket.
"By St Loy," quoth she, "to be a King this tattlemouth's not fytte,
Forsooth, for telling all, he is an A1 shytte."

THOMAS THE PRIVATISED TANK ENGINE



The Great Railway Bazaar

"THIS LOOKS interesting," said Thomas's guard, clutching a small yellow leaflet.

"Closing down sale. Thousands of items of railway memorabilia. Everything must go by the general election," read Thomas's driver.

"Let's go," said Thomas. "Maybe at last I'll pick up those replacement parts I need."

The big station was almost deserted when Thomas arrived. The Grey Controller took no notice of Thomas, but kept folding and unfolding a sheet of lined A4 paper.

Then a small boy entered the station, tugging at his mother. "Where's the jumble sale?" demanded the boy.

"This is it," replied the Grey Controller eagerly. "Everything you see — and much more — at give-away prices. Oh yes."

"Everything?" asked the boy, looking around. "Even those men working on the track?"

The Grey Controller scanned his sheet of paper. "Yes, they're here. Maintenance services. Roll-up, roll-up! Get them while they're hot — which they are not, of course."

"Now that's what I want," said the boy, pointing at Thomas. "An engine. Mummy, I must have that engine for Christmas."

Thomas was shocked when the boy's mother produced her cheque-book. "Hold on! I'm not railway memorabilia," he shouted. "And I'm not his to sell. If you want to buy me you'll have to pay every taxpayer in the land." Thomas's steam trailed away as he suddenly saw the Grey Controller's game. "Let's get out of here," he puffed. "Before he sells the very track under our wheels."

"THIS is how I see it," said Thomas's driver as they approached the big station on the last service of the day. "Everything must go on the railway, or else he'll go. That's the choice."

As they arrived the Grey Controller was still on the platform, his hair tousled and his tie aslant. He was frantically waving his sheet of paper in front of the last person on the station, a scruffy man with an empty bottle in his coat pocket who was settling down on a bench for the night.

"Looks like the choice has been made," sniggered Thomas as he shuffled off to his state-owned engine shed.

ST CAKE'S HEAD LASHES LEAGUE TABLES

by Our Educational Correspondent
John Mortarboard

MR J.R.T. KIPLING, headmaster of St Cake's, the prestigious £10,412-a-term Midlands public school, yesterday hit out at the "disgraceful distortions" thrown up by the government's league tables for schools.

St Cake's appeared in 2,816th place in the Department of Education's chart showing the exam record of Britain's 2,816 schools.

Cross Head

"The whole basis on which these tables are computed", said Mr Kipling, "is extremely unfair and gives a totally misleading impression.

"For instance," he went on, "no allowance is made for the quality of intake. It is all very well to point out that no St Cake's students passed their GCSEs last year, but I am forced to recruit all our pupils from the upper classes, many of whom come from broken stately homes and are generally very intellectually challenged, i.e. thick.

"Some of our boys can scarcely read the titles on the videos which they spend all their time watching."

Exceedingly Bad Cake's

Mr Kipling, himself an Old Cakeian, said that his school was at a gross disadvantage compared to schools in the inner cities, with their open recruitment policy.

"How can my pupils compete with all these bright Asian kids, who do their homework and pass exams? It is ludicrous to compare my school with a comprehensive."

Mr Kipling called for a new "value added" approach to the league tables, allowing for such factors as leadership qualities, friendliness of staff, the availability of vegetarian meals in the cafeteria and an in-house MOT testing bay for pupils' cars.

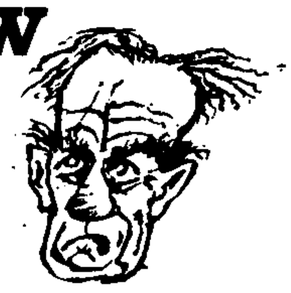
BRITAIN'S BOTTOM TEN

2810	[illegible]	31	+14	
2811	Hanger Lane Gyratory College, Hounslow	22	–13.2*	–12.0
2812	Ken Livingstone School, Neasden	21	+3.0	–4.0
2813	Nelson Mandela High, Toxteth	20	+2.6	17.0
2814	Marcus Garvey Technical College, Balham	16	–4.2	12.0
2815	Robert Maxwell Academy, Oxford	8	–6.3	30.0
2816	St Cake's	0	–112.3	0

**All these figures are meaningless*

"Help! It's after lottery losers!"

Lines On The Dismissal Of Mr Andrew Neill By Mr Rupert Murdoch



by William Rees-McGonagall

'Twas in the year nineteen hundred and forty nine
That there was born the greatest journalist of all time.
It was from the bonnie town of Paisley that the great man
came
And, as all the world now knows, Andrew Ferguson Neill
was his name.

But Caledonia's fair lochs and glens could not contain
Young Andrew's genius, so he got on a train.
He bade farewell to the land of Highland mist
And came to London where he got a job on The Economist.

But it was not long before this brilliant young figure
Caught the eye of the man all Fleet Street knew as
The Dirty Digger.
And in one of the fastest ever of journalistic climbs
He was promoted to the prestigious job of Editor of
The Sunday Times.

Soon all the nation was talking about this whizz-kid of
a lad
Whom the so-called wits of Private Eye enviously dubbed
"Brillo Pad".
This was a reference to his mop of frizzy wire-wool hair
Which looked like one of those scouring devices that
people keep in packs under the stair.

Along with light bulbs, buckets and bottles of carpet
stain remover
And also of course those little paper bags you put in
the Hoover.
All the world agreed that he was a dashing and
handsome fella,
And soon he had attracted a dusky beauty called Pamella.

Night after night they would dance at a disco called Tramp
Where you would not find people like Sir Peregrine
Worsthorne or Gavin Stamp.
Indeed these carryings-on soon became the subject of a
very famous case of libel
When Sir Peregrine went into the box and swore on the
Holy Bible.

"No self-respecting editors of Sunday papers
Should be seen in a night club performing vulgar capers.
They should be like myself, sitting in the Garrick Club,
Talking about the Maastricht Treaty over traditional
English grub.

"A typical menu of the day might be
Brown Windsor Soup, Roast Beef and a glass of Chateau
Lafite 1973.

But, instead of mixing with Archbishops and Lords,
Mr Neill chooses to cavort with the shameless
Miss Bordes."

Anyway, that was all a long time ago.
But it is the only thing about his editorship that we
all know.
Except of course that he exposed the marital problems of
Prince Charles and Diana
And went on TV to defend himself against Charles Moore
in a very courageous manner.

Nothing else that he did occurs to me
Except that he had a talk show on the station LBC.
This fired young Andrew with the desire to be a media star
Or a famous chat show host like America's legendary
Jack Paar.

So he packed his bags and caught the Concorde for
New York,
Hoping of that town too he would soon be the talk.
Mr Murdoch promised him fortune and fame
And that on American TV he would make his name.

The great media tycoon outlined his master plan.
"Brillo," he said. "You will be my network's anchorman."
But, alas for our hero, when he made his pilot,
It was under "G" for Garbage that the Americans chose
to file it.

New Yorkers could not understand a single word that
the Scotsman said.
And they were also baffled by what seemed to be the
dead sheep on his head.
After his first show, he went to bed feeling pleased but
tired.
Until the phone rang at 2 a.m. and Mr Murdoch said:
"You're fired."

"Please, sir," said Andrew, "can I have my old Sunday
Times job back?"
"No," said the Digger. "From that too you have got
the sack."
And so he pulled the plug on poor old Brillo,
And left him sobbing into a lonely pillow.

The only job left for Andrew to do
Is to present a show in the middle of the night on BBC2.
And, as befits his new status as a lowly hack,
To write articles for the Daily Mail somewhere near the
back.

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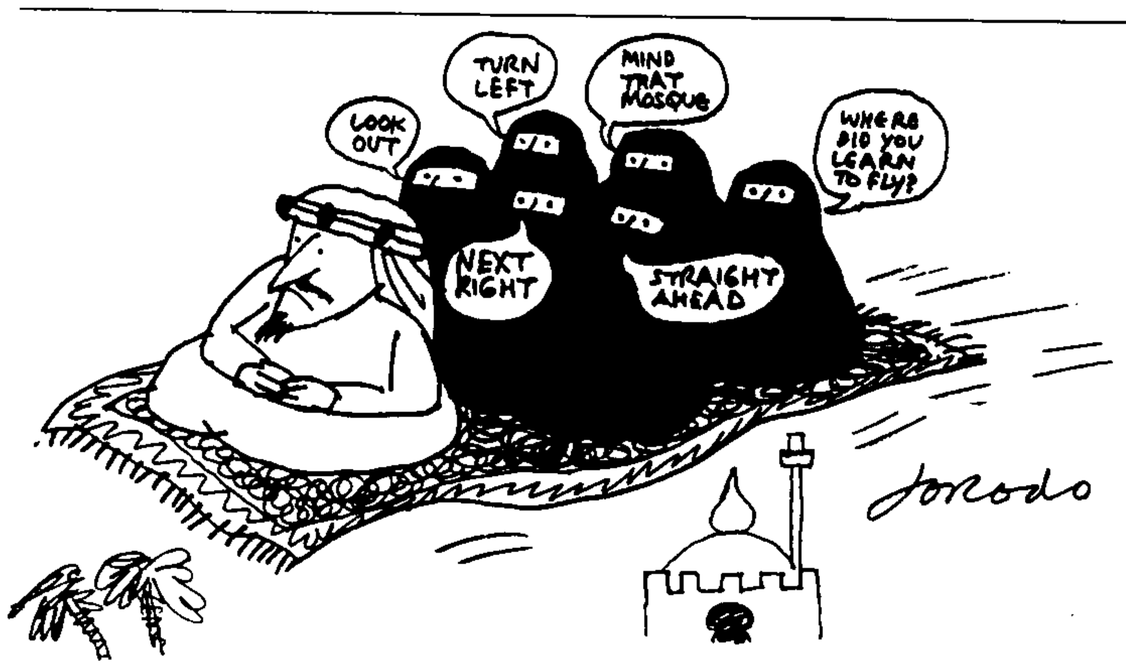


LUVVIES

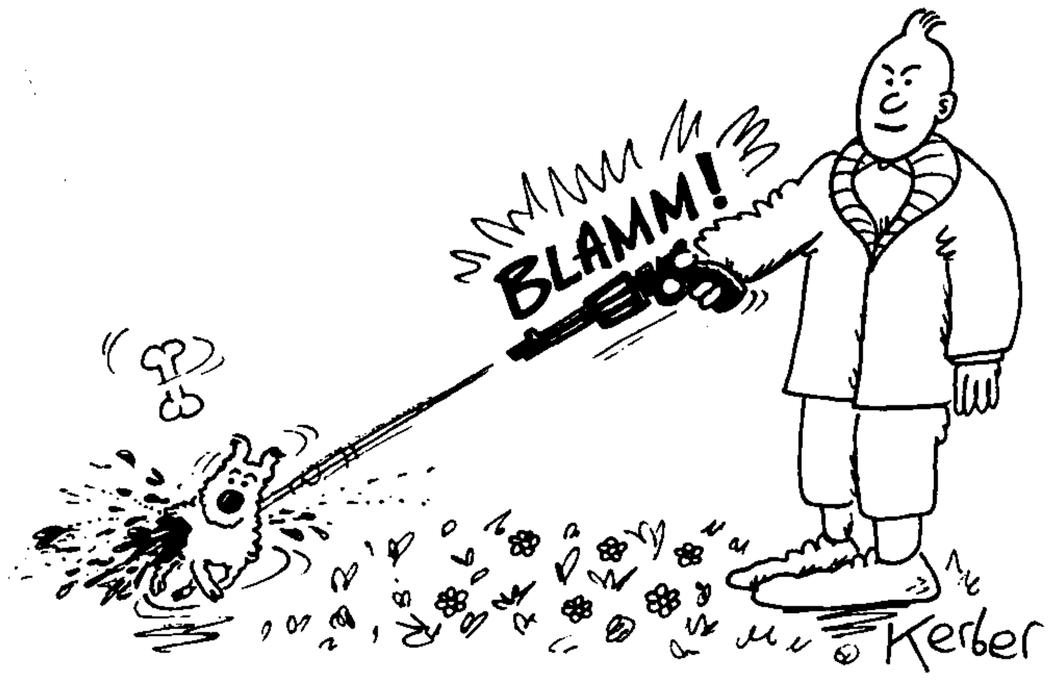
Doing theatre in the States is simply a physical problem. Somebody knows where I am every evening, strangers come and that bothers me. I want to work, just to concentrate quietly on the work, but it becomes an event for some people which means they won't let you escape. You're dealing with all this energy all the time, and it's painful...

I was scared of making movies — and, I think, reasonably so — because of the process: the environment, the rape of privacy, the assumption that people own your life because of some inability they have to take responsibility for their fantasies and projections.

WILLIAM HURT
The Times

Submitted by Francis Harvey.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.



TINTIN TARANTINO

Today's Ministerial Resignation Letter In Full

From Mr Patrick Nicholls MP

Dear Prime Minister,

I am delighted to be selected for today's resignation. My offence, as you will have read in the press, was to write the following article in the Totnes and Tavistock Exchange and Mart.

Why I Will Vote For Major

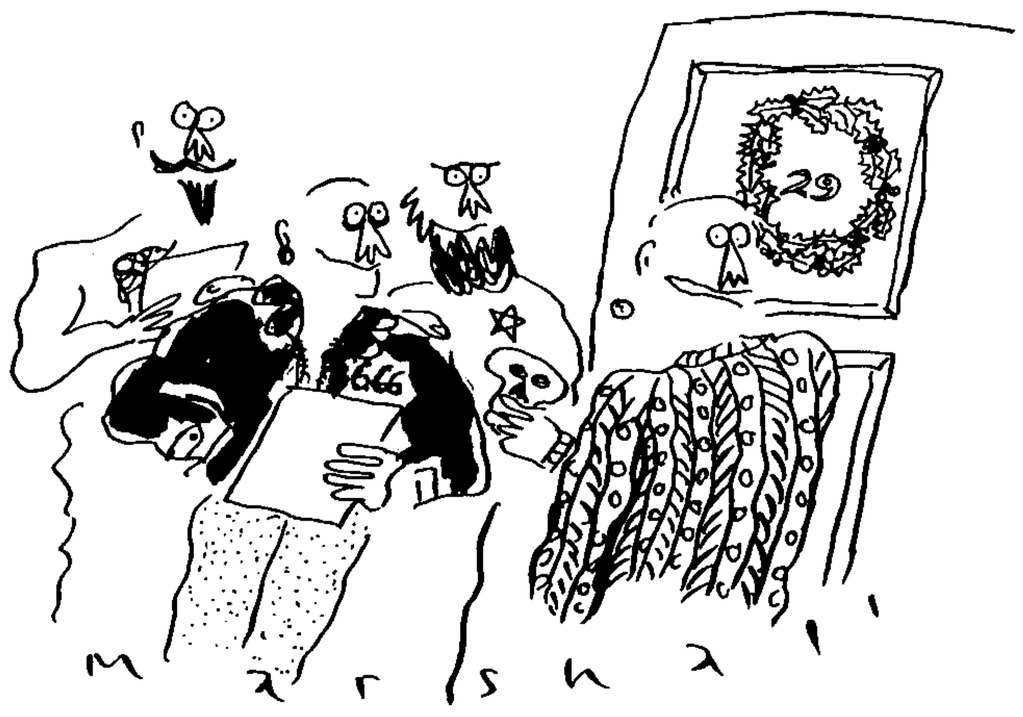
Mr Major may have his faults. But at least he is an Englishman. That Europe. Doesn't it make you sick? Swarming with Boche who got us into two world wars with their jackboots and concentration camps. As for the garlic-swilling, snail-guzzling Frogs, they are not much better. I say hats off to John Major for being British. He may be the worst prime minister we've ever had. But at least he is a white man.

On re-reading the above, I think it is the most brilliant article that I have ever written. But I realise that it leaves me with no alternative but to resign.

Yours faithfully,

SIR H. GUSSETT

(shurely 'Mr Patrick Nicholls MP'? Ed.)



"Darling, it's the local Satanists wondering whether they can sing us some 'Black Sabbath' "

DEBATE ON UNIFICATION SPLITS PARTY

by Our Political Staff **William Cash The Elder**

THE CONSERVATIVE Party plunged into a new crisis last night as factions within the party argued fiercely over the proposal for a unified Tory Party.

The so-called sceptics are against the Single Party idea and favour a broad range of Conservatives each doing and saying whatever they feel like.

On the other hand, the Federalists believe that a single party is the only way forward for Conservatives and that there will be long term benefits if they remain committed to one large organisation.

Matters came to a head when the factions clashed in the House of Commons. Said leading Tory sceptic Bill Crasher: "We're not going to be told what to do by some grey bureaucrat in his office in Downing Street. We're sick of his silly directives. All these charters and campaigns. We want a Tory Party where we keep our own identity and lose the next election."

Bananas Split

However, the pro-Government wing of the Tories hit back. Said leading Toryphile Tristan Garrulous-Jones: "They're trying to take us into the slow track of political life. We will be left way behind our colleagues in the other parties. If these rebels don't stop making silly threats, we'll call a General Election and they'll lose their seats and then they'll be sorry. So there!"

Jacques Majeur is 38 points behind.

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER
$2.50

English Magazine in Sinister Conspiracy Shock

by Our Hollywood Staff **Lunchtime O'Jews**

THE Hollywood Reporter can exclusively reveal that the English magazine The Spectator is run by a secret cabal of "Twits".

The "Twit conspiracy" is well-known in English media circles but until now no one has dared to speak out. But it is time the truth was told. Just look at the surnames of the people involved in the Spectator — Lawson, Cash, Johnson, Moore, House Chancellor, Nicholson, Palmer, Taki, Applebaum *(Shurely shome mishtake? Ed)*.

The surnames say it all. They're Twits. And they are typical of their kind. Upper-middle class, snobbish, lazy, mean and given to making absurd generalisations about everyone else.

William Cashin

Using their positions of power at the Spectator, these Twits extend their clandestine network to give patronage to other Twits and to exclude anyone who can write or who has anything interesting to say.

Said one Non-Twit who was too scared to give his name: "I have been trying to get into the Spectator for years, but instead Dominic Lawson keeps printing fantastically bad pieces by William Cash. Why? Simple. Because they are fellow Twits of course."

Old Goy Network

The excluded journalist continued: "Don't get me wrong. I'm not anti-Twitic. Some of my best friends are Twits. I just think that someone should point out the truth, ie that these people have a stranglehold on British life. If you're a Twit, it's a passport to the Telegraph, the Sunday Telegraph, the lot! They're everywhere! We've got to stop them before it's too late!"

Literary Review Old Friends Special

A Mind Of My Own
Elisabeth Maxwell
(Sidgwick & Jackson, £16.99)

THE TITLE of Betty Maxwell's autobiography, *A Mind Of My Own*, is entirely appropriate for a sham of a book. According to the flyleaf blurb, it is "a painfully honest account" of her marriage to Robert, the failed Atlantic swimmer and successful pensions swindler.

It is certainly painful for the thousands who came into contact with Maxwell: people he employed, humiliated, duped and robbed. For Mrs Maxwell manages to excuse her husband's monstrous behaviour — which even she cannot conceal — as a by-product of his misunderstood genius. He was, she laughably claims, "informed by noble ideals".

It is a great deal more difficult to trace the honesty. What, for instance, are we to make of certain changes which occurred between the final draft of her manuscript and the published version? Following revelations in the EYE about her failure to show remorse for the suffering pensioners, how "honest" was it of her to revise her comments?

Look at page 529 of the book and consider it in the light of the same passage in the manuscript. In both cases she writes: "I find it enormously difficult to express adequately all I have felt and will feel for the rest of my days for the Group's pensioners and the appalling anxiety they have had to endure."

In the book this is followed by a new sentence: "The loss of financial security in old age is cruel indeed, destroying peace of mind so essential to the enjoyment of life and shattering dreams of a comfortable and well-deserved retirement."

This extra nod in recognition of the pensioners' plight appears in place of a very telling piece of dissembling fantasy in the original, which has been deleted:

"People have asked me if I believe that Bob was a crook and personally responsible for the pension losses. I cannot comment at this stage with Ian and Kevin due to stand trial... but what I can say from my experience of 47 years with him is that I do believe with all my heart that had he lived... he would have worked relentlessly to save the fortunes of the Group, its employees and pensioners."

Another new sentence also appears on the same page: "The fact that thousands of the Group's pensioners and former employees have been affected in this way puts my own very real difficulties into proper perspective." Surely this was not inserted because of criticism that she has persistently whinged about losing her own pension?

There are other deletions too, though some may have been due to the attentions of Messrs Sue, Grabbit and Runne. For example, her trenchant attack on Roger Rich, the loss adjuster appointed by insurance companies to investigate the cause of Maxwell's death, was probably considered a little, er, too rich.

In the manuscript she claimed his report was "written in a patently biased way, including a number of statements which are either speculative or complete non-sequiturs, and whose conclusions are not supported by the available evidence".

This is missing from the book. Instead, she merely observes that some of his conclusions "seemed speculative"; and that she was "shocked" that the loss adjusters did not interview the family and relied instead on "interviews with the crew conducted more than a week after the events".

She has the cheek in the book to call for "a full inquiry" into how Maxwell died, conveniently overlooking her key role in preventing a proper investigation by expediting the removal of his body for burial in Israel. Why then did she delete from the book her original sentence: "This book is not the place to discuss my continuing disquiet about... the numerous inconsistencies and lies that came to light as I tried to make sense of my husband's death."

And what is the hidden agenda behind another inserted sentence? "I also remain puzzled as to why MGN and MCC, with their joint interest in the £20 million insurance claim and with the most to gain from challenging the loss adjusters' findings, have apparently chosen not to pursue the insurers through the courts on the basis of the pathologists' inconclusive reports as to the cause of death."

The revisions are significant because they indicate how ready Mrs Maxwell has been to rewrite history. For instance, she claims that after a row with her husband in June 1990 "there was no more contact between us until one day in November 1990 when Bob's office summoned me to join him at dinner in honor [*sic*] of the president of Italy at the Victoria and Albert Museum."

Yet she attended the Labour conference in October 1990, flying to Blackpool with Maxwell and co-hosting the traditional *Daily Mirror* lunch. A lapse of memory? Perhaps. But given the importance she attaches to their separation it is an odd error.

Odder still is the blurb-writer's view that the book "bears witness to Elisabeth's indomitable strength of character." What strength was there in allowing her children to be ritually humiliated and caned by her husband? And what strength was there in humbling herself for 47 years before a man who treated her like a servant? What strength of character is shown by inserting one pathetic phrase of sympathy to pensioners while defending every instance of his business malpractice?

PRIVATE EYE BOOK SIGNINGS

Come and meet

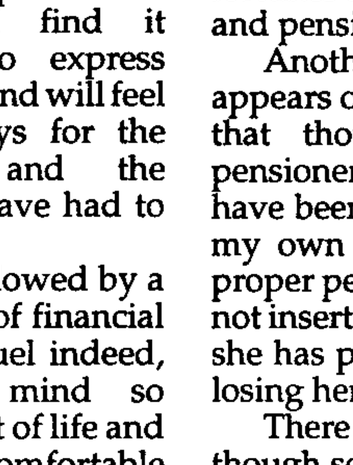
Ian Hislop, Richard Ingrams, Nick Newman and Barry Fantoni

at **DILLONS**, The Grand Buildings, Trafalgar Square, London WC2, Tel: 071 839 4411
on Tuesday 6 December at 1.00pm
and at **WATERSTONES**, 1 Whittington Avenue, Leadenhall Market, London EC3, Tel: 071 220 7882
on Friday 9 December at 12.30pm

when they will be signing copies of their new PRIVATE EYE books: *The 3rd and Last Secret Diary of John Major, Absolutely Libellous, Run For Cover and Colemanballs 7.*

If you can't attend, signed copies can be reserved by telephone from the bookshops.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS



MYSTERY surrounds the recently published BBC-Arts Council review of orchestras, conducted by Nicholas Kenyon, BBC music controller.

The introduction written by Gavin Henderson, new chairman of the music advisory panel, has not been sent out to the general public with the report, [illegible] Council has labelled his comments "confidential".

This may have something to do with the fact that his introduction is intelligently written and shows an impressive knowledge of the music business; that it maintains there is no overprovision of orchestras, but there is scope for orchestras to develop their international touring business; and that the opera companies should think about engaging some of London's freelance orchestras for specific productions.

Overall Henderson's contribution fizzes with ideas. So why are the Gt Peter Street mandarins so keen to gag him?

AT THIS time of year all performing arts companies hold their breath in anticipation of the annual Arts Council grant carve-up. So a perceptible gasp was heard when council chairman Lord Gowrie recently dampened speculation about increases for anyone.

He also had a go at the disgraced former heritage minister David Mellor for upping spending on his favourite companies while in office. Referring to "the Mellor Bulge" he came up with the curious notion that the arts would have difficulty coping with additional funds — presumably as a drowning man would have difficulty coping with a lifebelt.

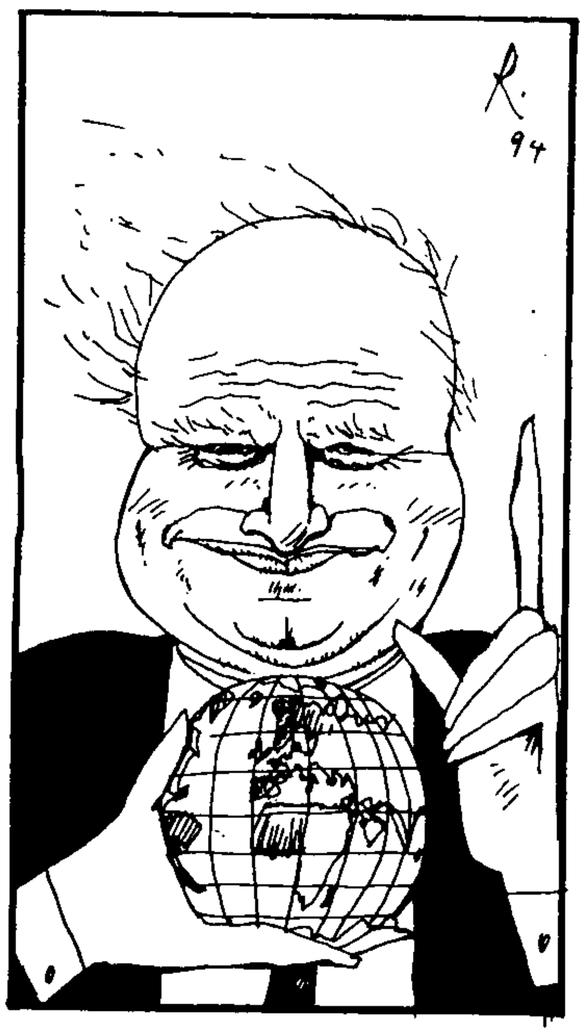
If one adds up the annual grants of every orchestra in the land one arrives at a grand total of £13.2 million — slightly less than the sum Gowrie is prepared to spend each year on Nicholas "Abominable" Snowman's South Bank centre.

But the sum pales compared to the amount the heritage department is prepared to spend on building the British Library (£500 million). That amount — for a building most people believe will be hopelessly inadequate anyway — would keep every British orchestra in business until the year 2032.

Moreover, any money coming to the arts from the national lottery will be spent on other capital projects, rather than performing arts. So where is the "Mellor bulge?" Perhaps Lady Cobham can advise.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Literary Review Old Friends Special



The Trap
Sir James Goldsmith
(Macmillan, £7.99)

THAT Sir James Goldsmith should slip easily into the role of loony tune prophet of apocalyptic doom will come as no surprise to anyone who has ever witnessed the great thinker in action. Those staring eyes. That accusatory finger. The demagogic delivery. None of that sits comfortably with rational opinions.

Nor should it be a surprise that his cure for the world in general and Europe in particular should be received with rapt attention and eulogistic applause from those in society, especially on the right, who feel under threat from forces their politicians cannot control.

What is surprising about Goldsmith's philosophy as expounded in *The Trap*, is to find the business autocrat who worshipped Thatcher, railed against the red threat and lives in grand style in Mexico, quoting Orwell, calling for more democracy and saving Europe and the third world from corporate plundering. Not quite vote Labour, but close. But then don't do as I did or do, do as I say has always been a Goldsmith philosophy.

The crises of the nineties and the "kick the bums out" attitude to politicians have spawned a childlike belief that Big Businessman knows best. Ross Perot polled some 20 percent of the vote in the 1992 US presidential election. Silvio Berlusconi swept to power in Italy earlier this year. And Goldsmith was elected a French MEP — although why he bothered is puzzling given his verdict that the European parliament is "overwhelmingly either a waste of time or downright destructive".

Alas countries turn out to be more complex than companies and the dictatorial styles which put Perot, Berlusconi and Goldsmith where they are in the rich list do not work in democracies.

Such men sell a simple message which is always initially persuasive. Goldsmith's big idea is regional protectionism which will save Europe from the social chaos caused by mass unemployment and unstoppable invasion by the dispossessed hordes of the third world rural poor. With that message come calls to curb the power of the Eurocrats, intensive farming and nuclear energy.

Much praise has been heaped on Goldsmith for the detailed arguments he advances. That overlooks the contribution from more than 20 little helpers to the guru's big idea.

The Trap echoes the most common concerns that beset western societies: unemployment, education, health, crime, the environment. "The problems are too complex and too widespread to be answerable with simple solutions," Goldsmith declares before spending the rest of the book advancing just such answers.

This is done by way of a series of "Tell me master, what is the way ahead?" questions from French journalist Yves Messarovitch, whose fawning approach explains why the French press is an establishment poodle.

Not that what Goldsmith has to say is just simplistic nonsense. His points about the dangers of the unelected, unaccountable Brussels bureaucracy; the EU's obsessive secrecy and opposition to open government; the risks from more Chernobyls and the Dr Frankensteins of the agri-chemical corporations are valid, if far from original.

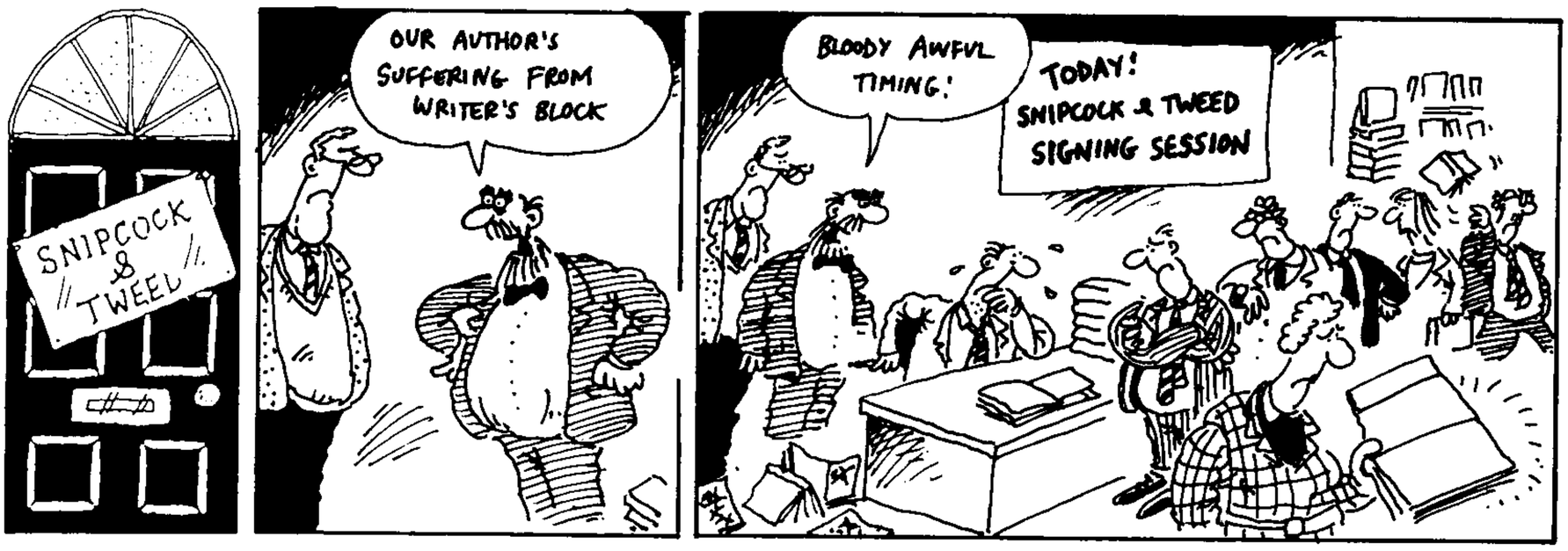
Most critics have concentrated on dismissing his call for a return to protectionism as factually flawed and ultimately disastrous. They have overlooked other fault lines in the Goldsmith great design. Such as the undercurrent of racism which surfaces when he raises the spectre of "uncontrolled immigration on a scale which cannot be integrated" meaning nations will be "overwhelmed" and "lose their identity". At times in Goldsmith's doomsday scenario as the third world billions head north all that seems missing is Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood".

A more damning omission is the awe-inspiring inconsistency if not hypocrisy of many of the Goldsmith views when compared with the man and his record. The father concerned about the population boom who has eight children. The supporter of a return to family values who has two families. The exponent of democracy who steamrollered shareholders and bullied newspapers. The advocate of open government who hides his business affairs behind offshore veils. The critic of multinationals whose companies span the globe. The opponent of nuclear power whose associates spied on anti-nuclear protestors. The friend of the earth whose current interests include mining, logging and oil. The hammer of the agri-barons who grew rich selling their produce through his shop chains.

But then Goldsmith, like all politicians, did not get where he is today by being consistent or principled.

"Wind is another growing source of power," declares the sage. And so it has proved. Goldsmith now has a platform in Strasbourg. But just as Perot has faded and Berlusconi's clean hands have been revealed to contain tax bribes, so the audience for citizen Goldsmith's panacea may soon realise there is much less to this neither jolly nor green giant. Just business as usual.

● **A collection of the best Literary Reviews is available in the shops now (*Lord Gnome's Literary Companion, Verso, £18.95*).**



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

FOR many years Valerie Eliot, widow of the Practical Cat, decreed what was and wasn't done at Faber and Faber. It now appears to be Phyllis, the Baroness James.

Aeons ago ff signed up *Observer* television critic and don John Naughton to write a warts and all biography of John "Armani" Birt, head of the BBC's thought police. ff insist that Naughton, not a man noted for missing deadlines, hasn't yet delivered. It is therefore most unfair of ill-wishers to suggest that Phyllis, an influential Beeb governor, has lectured the publishers' chairman, Matthew Evans, that she would take her stolid detective stories to a new home if ff were ever to publish Naughton's biography of "Armani".

□ ■ □

GLITTERING literary agent Pat Kavanagh has asked Jonathan Crap for a mere £500,000 for Martin Amis's next novel. Eddie "McBastard" Bell of HarperCollins, having just bagged the head of Kingers, is said to be keen to add the son to his collection.

It is unlikely Amis *père et fils* would want to be published by the same imprint, but Eddie does have access to the Digger's gold and certainly could pay the asking price.

These days the ridiculous sums which the mad conglomerates pay out to "star" authors are entirely to do with their chief executives' egos and street cred and nothing to do with the capacity of the authors to "earn" their ill-gotten gains.

If agreement isn't reached with Gail Rebuck and Cape, it is most likely that Martin will move to Viking Penguin. There have in the last few days been angry rows at Penguin between the big three, Peter Mayer, Peter Carson and Trevor Glover, and some of this may be to do with how much to offer Martin to have him hard and soft.

□ ■ □

BOOKWORM has boobed. In the last issue it was alleged that Gerald Seymour was leaving HarperCollins for Viking Penguin and that Clare "The Queen" Alexander blubbed when Christopher MacLehose rounded on her at a party for stealing his author. The author of his who will be published in future by Viking Penguin is Pete Dexter. It was he MacLehose ranted about, causing "The Queen" to blub. Apologies to all concerned.

And contrary to my claim in Eye 856, Gerald Ronson is not the proprietor of the main Longman offices at West Gate House in Harlow. Sorry for the confusion.

'Bookworm'

footnotes

Budge the Helicopter

THE CROWD at Doncaster races was growing restless. The big race of the day, the Miners' Handicap, should have started long ago.

Then came the dramatic reason for the delay: a helicopter landed in the middle of the racetrack. Out hopped Mr Richard Budge of R.J. Budge, the opencast mining king, followed by the Rt Hon Lord Wakeham, cabinet minister and leader of the House of Lords.

This happened on 10 September last year. What was such a senior politician and close friend of the prime minister doing in such close company with the mining king? The question takes on a new significance with the sale by the government of almost the entire privatised British coalfield to Mr Budge.

As secretary of state for energy from 1989 to 1992 Lord Wakeham laid the foundations for the privatisation of coal. In a careful letter in his own hand answering a query from the *Eye* about the racecourse incident, Lord Wakeham manages not to mention Budge's name. He attended the Doncaster races charity day, he says, because he was that year's president of the Coal Trade Benevolent Association. He does not mention that the president of the association is personally chosen each year by the chairman — and the chairman that year was, er, R.J. Budge.

PS: Lord Wakeham, who was a prominent and always controversial minister in the Thatcher and Major administrations from 1979 to 1994, has just been appointed chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, a traditionally non-partisan body, in which post, of course, he can be relied upon to be entirely objective — especially about any complaints from supporters of the governments he so faithfully served.

THE HOUNDING OF JOHN GORMAN (contd.)

■ THE mysterious persecution of John Gorman who once had the nerve to complain when he found a condom in his British Airways food goes on and on.

On 10 November Mr Gorman was waiting to board a flight to Rio when he was called by tannoy to go to the first-class reception desk at Heathrow airport's terminal four. At the desk he was handed a letter, headed with the official logo of British Airways.

The letter informed him he was "not welcome aboard this flight today to Rio" and ordered him to cancel all other British Airways bookings and switch to "a different carrier". Mr Gorman was also warned to stop trying to discredit the name of British Airways with "insipid and menacing allegations".

The letter said that BA's solicitors, Linklaters & Paine, had been instructed to "make application for your property, motor vehicle, and assets to be sequestrated when you fail to substantiate your allegations". Further, the letter said there was evidence to link Mr Gorman with Richard Branson of Virgin Airways, and to prove that he had been paid by Branson to continue his campaign against BA. Mr Gorman has never met or spoken to Branson in his life.

In a clear reference to the *Eye* and *BBC Newsnight*, Gorman was accused of "allowing yourself to be used by a gutter television programme together with so-called professional journalists". The letter ended: "Consider your position very carefully before further serious damage is contemplated against you."

The letter was unsigned. Gorman asked the reception staff who had delivered it. Apart from remembering a man in uniform, no one could help him. Angry and upset, Gorman flew to Rio. On his return, he protested to British Airways and its lawyers, Linklaters & Paine, but no one took the slightest notice.

There, no doubt, the matter would have rested had not an intriguing document been anonymously handed into the *Eye* offices over the weekend of 19-20 November. This purported to be a fax on notepaper headed AVIATION DEFENCE INTERNATIONAL, an American-owned security firm which operates at Heathrow for British Airways and other clients. The message was from Peter Goodenough to Keith Kerr, head of BA investigations, and read as follows:

Dear Keith,

As previously discussed no further telephone conversations re the Gorman case on the BA network — all future communication by prearranged fax using the code word agreed. In answer to your questions, the remainder of the GORMAN/DAVID ROSE file have now been destroyed...

In relation to ARMSTRONG, the relevant documents have been removed and some minor alterations to others have been carried out.

Our source at Heathrow police station has advised that no further action should be taken against GORMAN. In particular it was stressed that no further telephone calls should be made from BA premises as the tracing facility is still effective.

We have it on good authority that the Enfield police are handling the case badly, and that no progress is anticipated, and it is not conceivable for them to make any connection with BA without the evidence.

***FREE AS AIR:** Colin Marshall (chair) and Robert Ayling (chief executive) British Airways, enjoying their own company. But what about John Gorman?*

The calling card accidentally left at GORMAN'S flat is not an official BA card of WARMAN so he will be in the clear.

The letter we discussed will be deposited one hour prior to departure at the reception desk outside the first class lounge at Ter 4, this should avoid any identification of the person delivering it.

The fax ended with a signature, P. Goodenough.

For those who have not read the previous *Eye* articles on this subject, the following tips may help:

● A file of letters to the *Observer* journalist David Rose was stolen from John Gorman's flat during a raid on it last spring by two men who sprayed Gorman's eyes with mace. A calling card with the name Warman was dropped on the stairs by one of the assailants.

● Robin Armstrong is an employee of Aviation Defence International who accompanied Heathrow police officers in last year's raid and arrest of John Gorman (for nothing: there was no charge).

● Abusive and threatening calls to Gorman have been traced to BA security and to Heathrow police station. The most recent call — on 22 September — threatening more violence has been traced by British Telecom to British Airways administration offices in Victoria, central London, and a senior member of staff is under investigation.

● The theft of the file and the assault are being investigated by Enfield police.

The final paragraph of the fax refers in strikingly accurate terms to the threatening letter left for Mr Gorman at Heathrow's terminal four on 10 November.

A BA spokesman insisted BA knew nothing about the fax. Nor, he said, was BA in any way responsible for the threatening letter to Gorman before his flight to Rio. Peter Goodenough, said the spokesman, is a "duty officer employed by Aviation Defence International on British Airways contracts at Heathrow terminals". He knew nothing of the fax, said the spokesman, nor did Keith Kerr.

Moreover, no fax was sent to the investigations department on 7 November from the number on it (081-562-7387), though that is indeed an Aviation Defence International fax number at Heathrow's terminal one. The spokesman said that the threatening letter had been delivered to the reception desk at terminal four "at a time when the desk was temporarily unmanned". The spokesman concluded: "Despite considerable efforts we have not been able to find out who is responsible for either the letter of the fax." These "considerable efforts" have not included any contact with John Gorman.

Mr Gorman is not at all satisfied with these assurances and continues with his original complaint against BA.

PS: Three senior officers have investigated John Gorman's complaints against Heathrow police. They are: DCI Peter Weston of Enfield police, formerly of Heathrow police station; DCI Michael Lovelock of the police complaints branch, Ealing, formerly of Heathrow police station; Det Supt John Bates, of Kingston-on-Thames police, formerly of Heathrow police station.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 071 287 3183

HOWARD'S END

■ **WHEN the long-standing director of the standing conference on drug abuse (Scoda) retired this year, the department of health instinctively doled out taxpayers' money for yet another consultancy.**

The lucky consultancy firm was Roger Howard Associates, run by a former charity worker, Roger Howard. Howard worked at Scoda for six months and recommended various changes, including the appointment of a chief executive. As soon as the consultancy ended in September, Scoda duly advertised for a chief executive at £40,000 a year. And who got the job? Er, Roger Howard the consultant.

Mr Howard told the *Eye* he thought his appointment was "quite proper". Indeed, he thought his experience in the charity field made him eminently suitable. Asked whether consultants paid by the taxpayer should be seen not to gain advantage from their own recommendations, he said: "I don't think you or anyone else would want to disqualify me from applying from a position just because I was a consultant to the organisation which advertises it".

About half the costs of the standing conference — some £350,000 a year — are met by the department of health (taxpayer).

The Great Gun Quiz

■ **BEFORE everyone stops asking questions about Jonathan Aitken, the chief secretary to the treasury, here is one to be going on with.**

Which current cabinet *minister*, then a backbencher, knew most about the building of the supergun when his government said it knew nothing about it? Here are some clues:

● His investment firm, Aitken Hume, was an adviser to the owners of Walter Somers, which built half the British-made barrels for Saddam's superguns.

● A former director of Aitken Hume, Mr S. Twentyman Graham (sic), was also a director of Sheffield Forgemasters, which built the rest of the supergun barrels.

● The minister in question was also a director of BMARC, an arms company. From September 1989 to March 1990, during which time government ministers later pretended they knew nothing at all about the supergun, the managing director of BMARC, Bill McNaught, constantly met MI6 to tell it about an associate firm's deep involvement in the supergun project.

● The minister in question resigned all his directorships in the spring of 1992 and joined John Major's government — as minister of defence procurement (Arms Dealer In Chief to HMG).

If you still can't guess his name, look at the picture.

Spare the Rod and spare the child

■ **WHEN he worked with the security services, Rod Richards, the fanatical new education minister for Wales, was taught that people should do what they are told.**

Government policy is for state schools to "opt out" of council control and place themselves at the mercy of ministers like Rod Richards. So Rod the Rod, as he is affectionately known at the Welsh office, could not believe his ears when he heard that the big West Monmouth comprehensive school had voted last July not to opt out — and by a large majority, too (528, or 59 per cent, to 362, 41 per cent).

He announced at once that this

shocking result had been brought about by "lying" propaganda from left-wing parents, and ordered a rerun of the ballot. This time he made sure parents knew what they would be voting about: 900 videos putting an unashamedly biassed case for opting out were delivered to all the parents.

Now they have voted again. The turn-out was huge — 71 per cent compared to 60 per cent in July. The vote for opting out was down to 321 (31 per cent); and the vote against enormously up to 725 (69 per cent). A firm majority had been turned into a rout. Perhaps Mr Richards should go back to spying (or to his even less successful career as publican).

UNHOLY TRINITY

■ THE inquest into Mark Harris (see *Eye*, 9 September) who died on 9 July at Trinity police station in Bristol was heard on 15, 16 and 17 November.

Bristol police witnesses were allowed to sit in court and listen to their colleagues as they built up a compact if elaborate case to prove that Mr Harris committed suicide. He was so cheerful, said the arresting officers, that they allowed him, against all the rules, to keep his belt when they put him in his cell.

He was last seen alive at 10.45pm. At 11.15 he was dead, by strangulation. The police case was that he had climbed up on a toilet, and fixed one end of his belt round a tiny grille six foot ten inches up the wall (without getting any of the dust or dirt round the grille on his fingernails or hands). He had then, the police story ran, fallen forward with the belt round his neck, and hanged himself.

The jury listened to this careful case as it was built up by officer after officer. They heard one officer say no one had been down to the cell after 10.45, and another say he had gone down in that time to tell Mr Harris he would be charged with burglary. Other prisoners said they heard Mr Harris crying out for help before he died.

The coroner told the jury that if they believed Mark Harris killed himself, their verdict should be suicide. After a few minutes they came back with an open verdict.

Registered Posts

☛ Charles Hendry, Tory MP for High Peak and parliamentary private secretary at the department of social security, writes to say: "I terminated my association with Andersen Consulting..to avoid precisely the concerns you outlined." (See last *Eye* for Andersens close and lucrative association with the DSS).

☛ The *Eye* can now reveal the full extent of the "occasional journalism" under which heading Mr Bill Powell, Tory MP for Corby, claims he registers his monthly retainer from the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies. He wrote one article for the *Gulf Post* (a tiny, fourth-rate circular with about 90 subscribers) in February 1993 ("Even-Handedness wanted from the Clinton Administration"); and another in July 1993 ("Lack of Middle East Progress Disappoints British MPs"). Mr Powell got £750 a month from the Gulf Centre between October 1993 and May this year, when his monthly payment was cut to £500. In all that time he has not written a single signed article for the *Gulf Post*.

The Loan Rangers

■ **MORE lucrative government work for Coopers & Lybrand: the department of education has called them in to investigate what the minister Tim Boswell calls some "uncorroborated allegations about certain executives" at the Student Loans company.**

This is a Glasgow-based quango which lends government money to students, and this month celebrates the 2000th student it is taking to court for non-repayment of loans.

And what exactly are those uncorroborated allegations? How can they be serious enough to justify yet more taxpayers' money for Coopers & Lybrand? Surely they can't be the same old stuff about expenses, which included a surprising amount of money spent on "spirits, boardroom" (£196 in April 1992, for instance) and cricket matches (£470 for "Scotland v Pakistan" in June 1992, for instance).

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In the City

NOW LET us praise famous men of the moment. Step forward Jonathan Aitken, chief secretary to the treasury and long time man in London for those corruption-hating sons of the desert, the rulers of Saudi Arabia.

After spending the Thatcher years in the wilderness, Aitken was summoned to the Major colours in 1992 as a junior defence minister. The MP for Thanet South knew more than a little about the arms business from his travels in Saudi Arabia and close ties to not just two sons of King Fahd and their bagmen, but Wafic Said, the bagman for defence minister Prince Sultan and his sons.

When earlier this year Aitken was promoted to number two at the treasury this too seemed no less appropriate given the MP's other career, as the founder and chairman of financial services group Aitken Hume International. A man of the City in whose hands the nation's finances are clearly safe.

But a close examination of the record of Aitken Hume — Aitken's account at whose bank he used somewhat belatedly to settle the balance of that bill from the Paris Ritz — hardly serves as a glowing testimonial to the treasury minister's financial expertise and sagacity.

Aitken Hume was established with his cousin Tim Aitken in 1980-81 as a result of the acquisition, through a company set up by Tim's grandfather Lord Beaverbrook, of first the "shell" Aberdeen Investments and then Hume Corporation. An initial investment of £40,000 spawned a group worth some £60 million. Aitken Hume shares more than doubled to 215p during the financial services boom.

But it soon became clear that the Aitkens did not have a sure touch when it came to doing deals. A 1983 flotation of US dishwasher maker Chemical Methods Associates quickly became a disaster. The company missed its profits forecast, the shares collapsed and investors had to be offered their money back. Substantial questions were raised about the accounting practices of another Aitken Hume protégé, burglar alarm group Security Centres, and the shares disappointed. Leisuretime International, a hotel company that went into leasing hand dryers, turned into another dog.

By 1985 Aitken Hume was viewed with increasing suspicion by the City as always promising much but delivering little. A disastrous slump in profits and a failed bid to buy back the Beaverbrook farm by taking over the Express newspaper group Fleet Holdings resulting in a further share price slump saw the ejection of Tim Aitken by cousin Jonathan who took over as chairman with a £10,000 salary plus 1.5 percent of net profits.

This coup was facilitated by the arrival as major shareholders of Saudi Investment & Finance Corporation (SIFCO), which invested some £8 million for a 12 percent stake. SIFCO was representing the interests of Wafic Said. Jonathan Aitken's good friend Prince Mohammed, Fahd's second son, and other Saudi royals had previously invested in Aitken Hume's bank.

It is the Aitken-Mohammed link which explains the MP's clout in Saudi Arabia. Aitken first met Mohammed in the seventies and went to work for his Al-Bilad group as managing director of its London subsidiary. Through Al-Bilad, which acted as an agent in Saudi Arabia, Mohammed, his relatives and friends obtained enormous commissions on contracts for major foreign firms such as Hyundai, Philips, ENI and Bechtel. Commission on one communications contract was estimated at up to $500 million. Bechtel is said to have paid him up to $200 million. One oil deal with ENI was said to have produced some $50 million. So avaricious was Mohammed that his father was said to have blocked a telecommunications deal because the $100 million commission his son was to collect was excessive. "He was very greedy," explained an American businessman.

However, Saudi friendship came at a price. A mysterious Panamanian company with a Swiss-based director was paid £145,750 for introducing Saudi investors to Aitken Hume.

Despite Saudi support Aitken Hume failed to perform under Jonathan Aitken's non-executive chairmanship. A series of senior directors followed Tim Aitken out of the door clutching six figure cheques. But it did help Aitken to fend off an unwanted takeover bid from Tranwood in 1986 after the company reported losses of £9 million. When Tranwood struck Aitken Hume was described by one City commentator as being "in a parlous state, its credibility in the City lower than ever". Its accounts were a mess, its forecasts flawed. Jonathan tried to blame it all on cousin Tim who sued for defamation. Tranwood's defeat began the long march back from around 175p of the Aitken Hume share price.

But Aitken Hume's problems now attracted the attention of another backer who Jonathan Aitken gratefully welcomed aboard as an ally. Hong Kong businessman Lee K. Ming Tee, known to his friends as "Mr Gleaming Teeth". Lee, a hyperactive stock market operator, picked up an 11 percent stake which he began to build up as did Wafic.

The role of Lee and the Saudis increased City unease. So too did the impact of the stock market crash of October 1987 in the aftermath of which Aitken Hume slumped to 75p. Aitken tried to revive the group's fortunes by taking it further into offshore finance, acquiring Guernsey trust managers and company administrators, Bachmann Group. Aitken Hume was now a major player in the tax avoidance world — a curious qualification, it might be felt, for a present day treasury minister concerned with tax collection.

But still the problems kept coming. Aitken Hume was criticised in the 1988 department of trade and industry report into illegal concert party share buying in Equity & General for being "at the very least... insufficiently vigilant". Aitken Hume briefly became advisers to Eagle Trust and its now imprisoned conman chairman John Ferriday. The Bank of England was said to be concerned about the group's financial health given its banking licence and to be monitoring Aitken Hume's affairs. Another first for a future treasury minister. No doubt Aitken and BoE governor Eddie George review old times when they meet.

Aitken Hume shareholders were far from impressed as their company plunged into the red when their chairman had his service contract changed in 1988 so that instead of his pay going down with profits it went up from £27,000 to £40,000. This was done by dropping the profit percentage element which would have meant his pay would have possibly reverted to a basic £10,000.

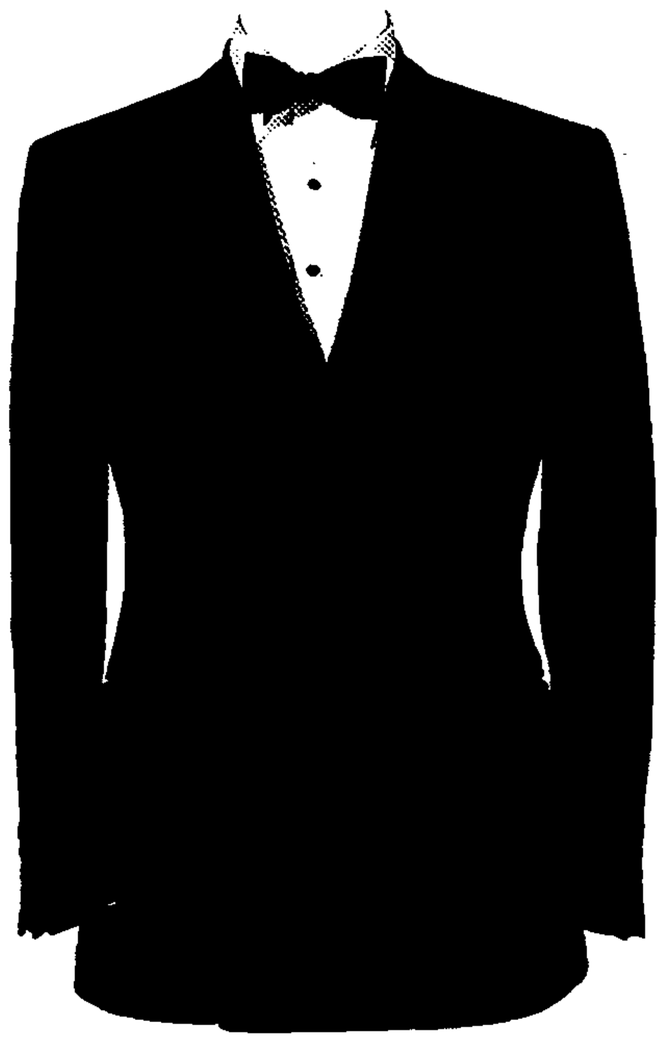
With losses of more than £3 million, the shares down below 50p, assets being sold at substantial losses and his friends Wafic and "Gleaming Teeth" sitting on multi-million losses, Jonathan Aitken was far from a City success. But that did not prevent him taking over as executive chairman in early 1989 when yet another chief executive went overboard. He held that position for a year before stepping down to deputy chairman.

But the Aitken Hume image failed to improve. In 1991 the bank was fined £18,000 by the Securities & Futures Authority for illegally carrying out stockbroking business. By the time Jonathan Aitken resigned from Aitken Hume in May 1992 the company was profit making but the shares continued to drift lower. By then it had been forced to sell Bachmann Group back to its vendors for £1 million when they could not agree on the amount due under the terms of the 1987 purchase.

Thankfully for Aitken he was therefore not on the Aitken Hume board last year when Hong Kong police raided companies connected with "Gleaming Teeth". The Hong Kong authorities announced a major investigation of Lee following a highly critical report into his Allied Group amid talk of "serious implications for the standards of corporate conduct" and "very large sums of money" being unaccounted for by the MP's erstwhile boardroom colleague.

Lee was forced to resign from Aitken Hume a year ago, but earlier this year reemerged to buy out Wafic Said and the other shareholders who received 55p a share. A long way from the 215p peak, but by then Aitken Hume's founder had progressed to bigger things — helping to run the finances of Great Britain plc.

'Slicker'



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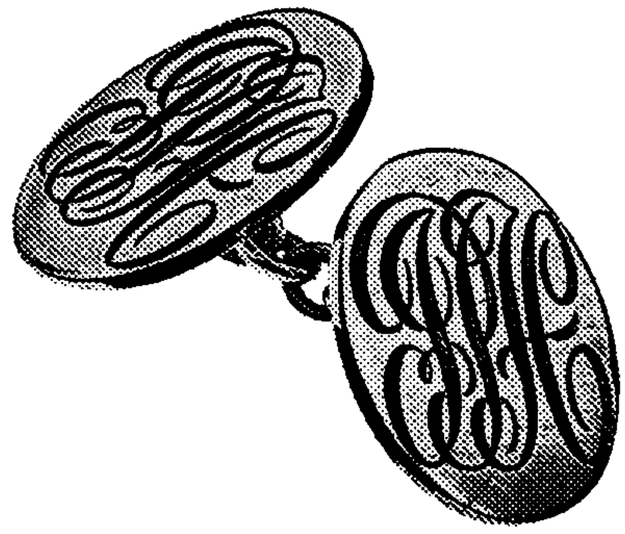

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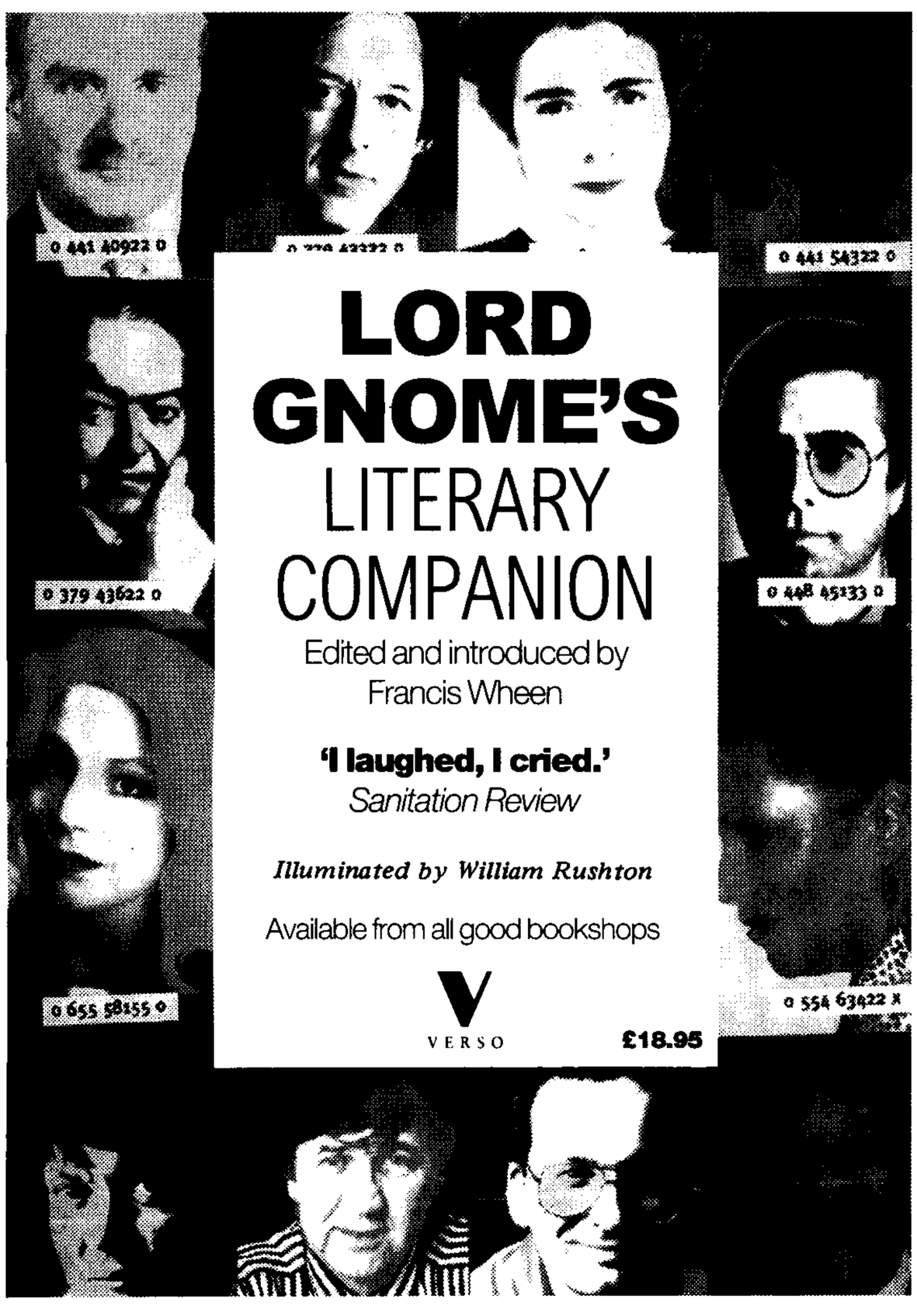

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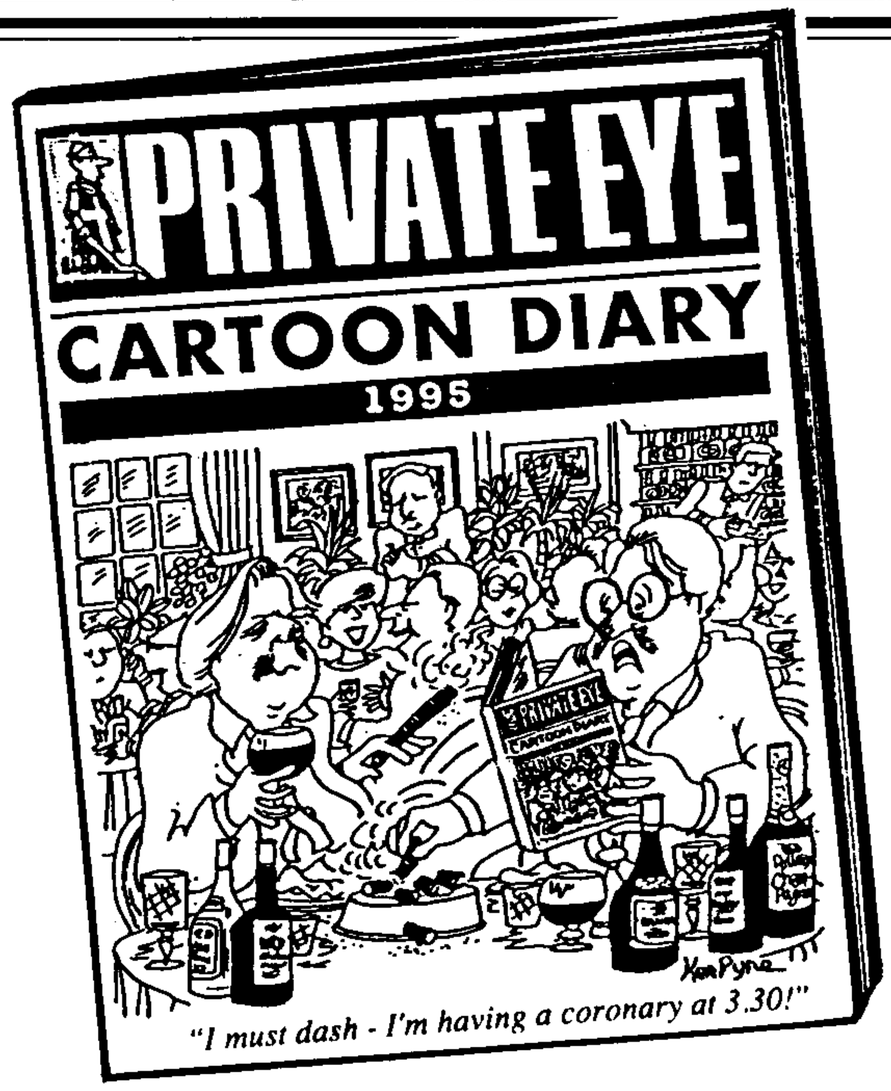

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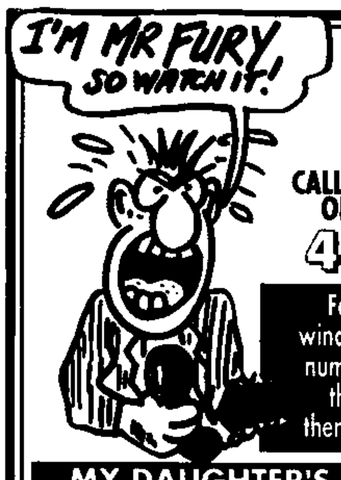

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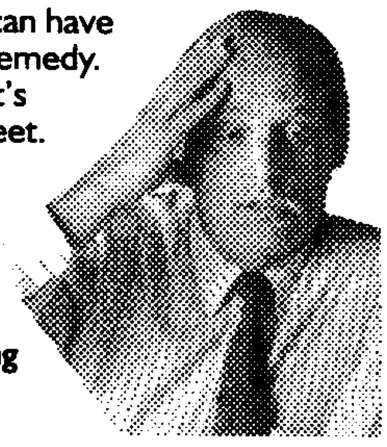

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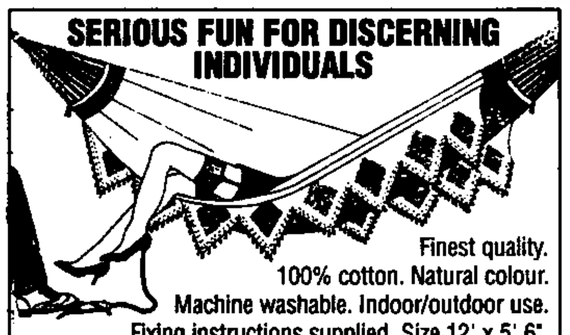

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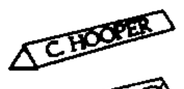

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QUOTE

The Japanese Foreign Ministry yesterday apologised for a "clerical error" in its Washington embassy 53 years ago that led to the attack on Pearl Harbor being carried out before an official warning of imminnent war could be delivered... According to documents released over the weekend, two diplomats whose job it was to transmit the cables from Tokyo and deliver them to the US government did not realise the urgency of the matter and were preoccupied with a party on the eve of the attack.

Terry McCarthy, Independent

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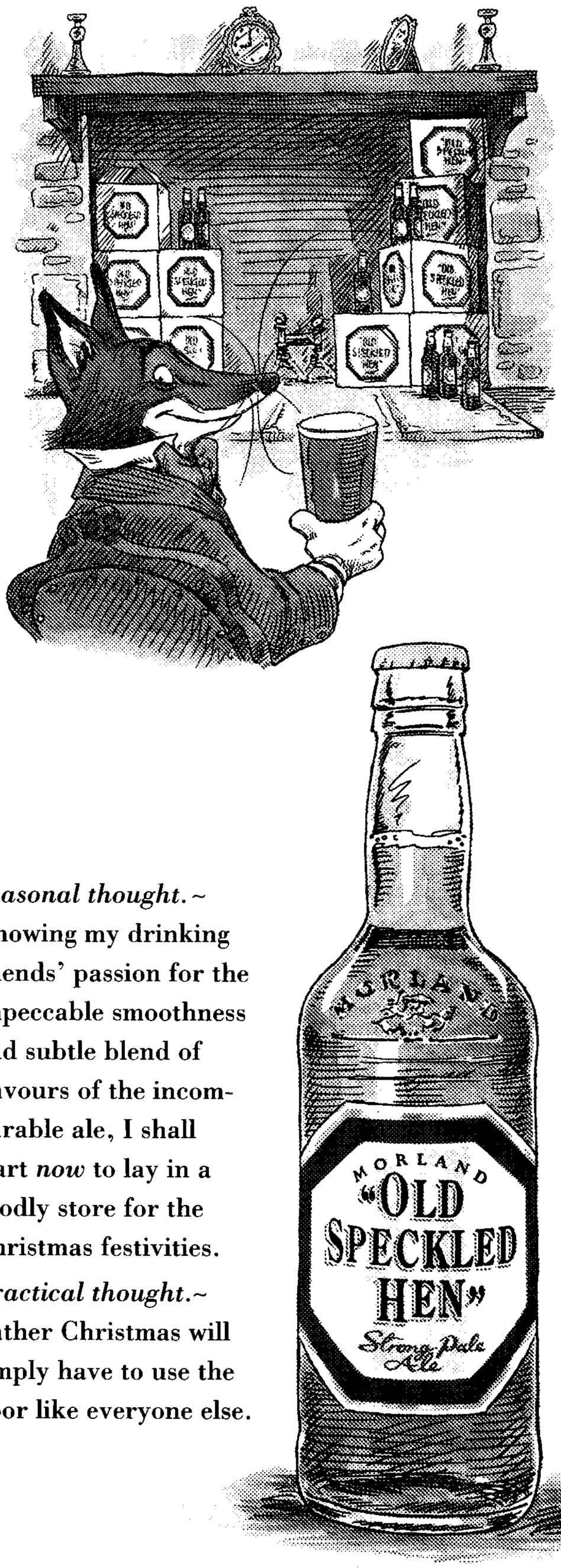

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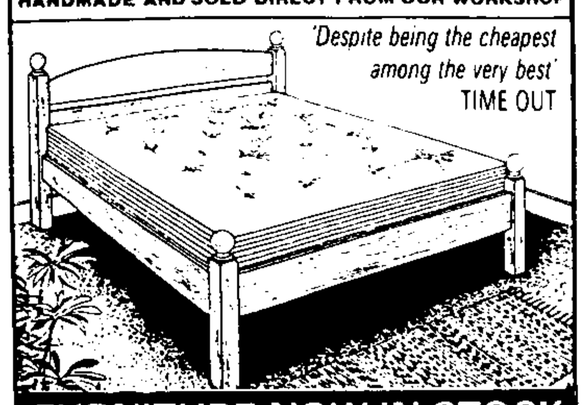

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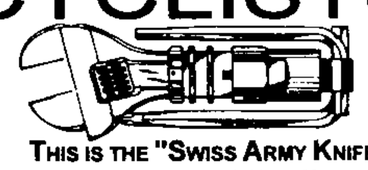

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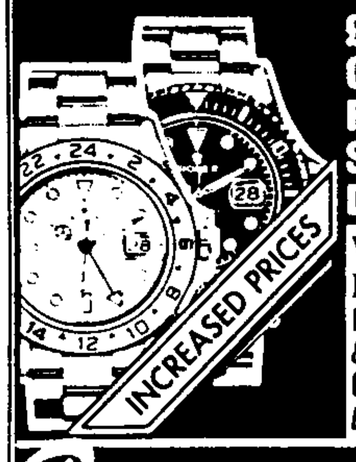

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